

PARTY AT THE END OF THE WORLD

By **ANDREW B. LOHSE**

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I. Overview

Not long ago, I was a coke-addled elitist Dartmouth College fratboy watching my life slip away from me on a tide of cheap beer, vomit, and Jim Beam. I got so impossibly far from my humble, conservative middle-class suburban upbringing that a nihilistic alter-ego seemingly overtook who I had been before. I could not stop my identity's disintegration—instead, I saw its dissolution as a parable of my generation nearing the end of the world.

Now, through chronicling my experience at Dartmouth, I have inched my way towards redemption by becoming the focal point of a national movement to reform fraternity life as we know it, appearing on television, radio, and internet media to offer my insights; I am also the subject of a high-profile documentary filmmaker's next work. I have been lauded by The National Collaborative for Hazing Research and Prevention and asked to give talks on the psychology of fraternity hazing.

This proposal is for a work of narrative nonfiction, entitled **PARTY AT THE END OF THE WORLD**, chronicling my story of squalid fraternity debauchery at Dartmouth College—a setting and storyline that were famously the inspiration for the iconic film *Animal House*. It has been widely publicized of late that *Animal House* was based on the Dartmouth fraternity Alpha Delta, and that my former fraternity Sigma Alpha Epsilon was the inspiration for Omega house, *Animal House*'s supercilious, preppy nemesis.

The national media attention my story has received began with an expose that I published in *The Dartmouth* on January 25th 2012 revealing my former fraternity's hazing practices. I was subsequently profiled in an 8,000 word *Rolling Stone* magazine piece further telling my story and outlining the depraved culture that dominates student life at

Dartmouth. Both the column and the Rolling Stone piece have gone viral and, as other hazing incidents of national import have surfaced, become the linchpin of the public's dawning awareness of the myriad problems with frat culture.

PARTY AT THE END OF THE WORLD is a coming of age memoir detailing my experiences at Dartmouth and specifically chronicling my *felix culpa* from high achieving, strait-laced public school student who cast aspersions on peers who drank or so much as dabbled once with marijuana, to coked out moral nihilist undergoing and performing Abu Ghraib-style feats of hazing, facing felony charges for cocaine possession and witness tampering, and ultimately hitting rock bottom—being charged with drunkenly assaulting a College security officer. It is a story of a young man's search for absolution in a wasteland of privilege and moral entropy. Before Dartmouth, the raciest transgression I had ever committed was cutting high school once to go to a John McCain rally, an infraction ultimately remedied by a pleading phone call from my mother to the principal in order to preserve my record of perfect attendance maintained since the third grade. I was raised as a model of upright moral behavior and academic ambition, a wholesome young man in pursuit of what seemed to be the American dream of upward class mobility. Needless to say, I was ill-prepared to face my induction into the dark heart of that elite class, and my ultimate moral outrage made me both persona non grata to Dartmouth and prodigal son to my middle class suburban roots.

After earning the rare distinction of essentially being kicked out of an Ivy League school twice—depending on how you look at it—I entered rehab and found myself seeking my redemption by working to expose and reform Dartmouth's fraternity system, turning on the culture that had helped to damage me and many other young men I knew, young men who appeared to be the brightest minds of a generation. Young men whose moral compasses had been eviscerated by their experience at one of the most prestigious colleges in America.

Though measuring in at only 750 words, my original op-ed on hazing and the College administration's complicity at its highest levels in protecting the fraternities from exposure initiated a firestorm of media, spawning over one thousand articles on the controversy as it developed. The scandal is still ongoing. The AP, Boston Globe, Huffington Post, New York Times, and hundreds of other publications, blogs, and television stations have picked up the story—which has taken on a new international relevance since Dartmouth President Jim Yong Kim was selected by President Obama to serve as the chief of the World Bank. Typical story, right? Go to Dartmouth for a few years, help cover up all that depraved shit that goes on, leave with a job in banking. The irony is just unreal.

I've given interviews to CBS Inside Edition, three NPR affiliates, RollingStone.com, and have been approached to appear on *Good Morning America*, *The Today Show*, and *Dr. Phil*. [REDACTED]
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[REDACTED]
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II. Audience

The proposed book, *PARTY AT THE END OF THE WORLD*, sits at the intersection of many important questions facing college-bound young men and women in America today, current college students, their parents, and all those who have attended college or were once members of fraternities or sororities. *PARTY AT THE END THE WORLD* explores the question of how these organizations negatively affect personal growth, reassessing the role of fraternities in contemporary culture through the lens of one young man's struggles. As high profile hazing-related deaths at many schools grab headlines across the country, hazing is undoubtedly becoming an issue of well-deserved national attention, much like bullying before it. Revelations of degrading—and sometimes deadly—hazing at schools as diverse as Florida A&M, Princeton, Michigan, Yale,

University of Kansas, and SUNY Binghamton point to the precipitously increasing relevance of hazing and fraternity-related stories in our public discourse.

The proposed book will seek to further drive the discussion that I began at Dartmouth, serving as the long-form focal point for all who wish to understand how earnest, high achieving high school students can find themselves out of their depth in the deranged world of violent initiation which is, as I argue and national journalists verify, terrifyingly widespread.

Additionally, as the Occupy Wall Street movement reflected, many citizens are curious about the culture that foments the avaricious and nihilistic attitudes that appear to be at the heart of the nation's elite class. What I offer is a view into the ground zero where these attitudes are incubated—the violent initiation rites of exclusive social clubs, the Ivy League culture of substance abuse and entitlement.

Before penning my hazing expose, my writing on elite colleges' corporate recruiting practices had already gained widespread attention, resulting in one of my op-eds being picked up, cited, or purchased for reprint by: The Atlantic Wire, CNBC, New York Times Dealbook, Business Insider and many finance industry wire services. With that same column I succeeded in drawing the co-CEO of the largest hedge fund in the world, Bridgewater Associates, into a public sparring match regarding his firm's recruiting practices, in the pages of Dartmouth's school paper.

Millions of Americans attend college each year, and hundreds of thousands become affiliated with fraternities and sororities. Many consider such an affiliation to be for life and thus follow "Greek" stories at their university and in the nation at large with great interest. Additionally, there are 70,000 Dartmouth alumni worldwide who follow their alma mater's news—and especially its scandals—with an intensity unmatched at virtually any other university. Being among some of the highest earning college graduates in the country, Dartmouth alumni spend liberally on all things related to their alma mater.

More broadly, the American public has a seemingly insatiable appetite for voyeuristic stories about elite cultures and their attendant depravities. *PARTY AT THE END OF THE WORLD* aims to tie together many popular narrative nonfiction genres: the coming of age tale, the tale of addiction and recovery, the tale of what goes on behind American education's Ivy covered walls, and the tale of a young man trying to understand his generation and himself.

It is a story firmly rooted within the alluring "sex, drugs, and Ivy League" sub-genre of American literature, set against the backdrop of a generation that ambivalently believes that, perhaps, the world may be ending in December 2012. As a former member of that auspicious Class of 2012, I was on the frontlines of the apocalyptic, "take it while you can" culture.

III. About the Author

Before I was a pariah at Dartmouth College for breaking the school's code of silence about fraternity culture, I was a high-achieving English major with dual concentrations in creative writing and literary theory, a functional alcoholic, and a chauvinistic coke-addled Don Juan and champion of fraternity life. Serving as my fraternity's rush chairman, I helped manufacture the lies that convinced younger men to pledge, allotting much of my extra-curricular time to wooing freshman boys and partying with them late into the morning five nights a week while rattling off the names of famous SAE alums (Chief among them: former Treasury Secretary and Goldman Sachs CEO Henry Paulson '68) and showboating the frat's secret tattoo as a means of salesmanship. The symbol, "Phi Alpha"—which means "light from darkness"—is carved into my side. It is a signifier of my personal struggle.

In May of my sophomore year I was arrested in a drug bust at my fraternity—which had been initiated by another brother who loathed me and the others involved—and was

charged with felony cocaine possession and two counts of felony witness tampering. That night, while high on cocaine, I was interrogated by two bullish detectives after registering blood alcohol count of .31.

The criminal charges against me were ultimately lowered to misdemeanors, to which I pled *no lo contendere*. I was suspended from the school for a year. During my time away from Dartmouth I worked at a bar, backpacked through Southeast Asia with my older brother (also a Dartmouth man), and volunteered for an [REDACTED]. I returned to the College in June of 2011. I had matured, but still fell prey to the old culture and behavior that had haunted me. My downward spiral had not been completely halted by my time off; it ultimately culminated with a second arrest for assaulting a female campus security officer with a folding chair—a charge which was later knocked down to public intoxication, as it was deemed that I threw the chair in her general direction, but not at her. For me, a few yards of well-manicured lawn were the difference between freedom and a free vacation in the house of corrections. This event was the ultimate wake up call I desperately needed to transform my negative experiences into positive change for others—and, perhaps, to tell an entertaining story in the process.

As an essayist, my op-eds for The Dartmouth Review, The Dartmouth, The Dartmouth Free Press, The Dartmouth Independent, the New York Daily News and the Harvard Crimson have been picked up or cited by: Huffington Post, NBC Nightly News, The Nation, The Atlantic Wire, The Nation New York Times Dealbook, Business Insider, CNBC, and Liberty Maven.

IV. About Dartmouth's Greek Life

While most peer institutions have outlawed, de-recognized, or otherwise seriously reformed their University's Greek system, Dartmouth's fraternity and sorority life has remained incredibly robust since its inception in the mid-nineteenth century. More than two thirds of eligible students pledge Greek houses. Due to Hanover, New Hampshire's

geographic isolation and the historical prominence of the Greek system—coupled with the College’s unofficial and oft-proclaimed motto, “Lest the Old Traditions Fail”—fraternity life is Dartmouth’s single most, if not only, potent cultural force.

These factors act together to create a highly stratified social environment that self-polices through violent hazing, ritualized binge drinking and drug use, and inescapably classist and elitist attitudes, rendering Dartmouth’s undergraduate life one of the most hyper-competitive of the already socially competitive Ivy League. Thus, Dartmouth produces many “organization men” (and relatively few free thinkers) with attitudes perfectly suited towards Wall Street and corporate life. For most affiliated students, social life trumps academic life; this environment has been described by the College’s own faculty as “decidedly anti-intellectual”.

V. Comparison Titles

CATCHER IN THE RYE, J.D. Salinger

Obviously, this book is a high-selling American classic and staple of high school English courses. It is a story, told in a famously cynical tone, of a young man’s personal development after being kicked out of a prep school. CATCHER IN THE RYE is an important point of reference and inspiration for my writing and outlook; also, my predicament as the narrator of PARTY AT THE END OF THE WORLD is not entirely dissimilar to Holden Caulfield’s. The proposed book also differs inasmuch as it aims to be a “movement piece” for fraternity reform by offering the story of my personal unraveling and redemption, in a sense aiming to “catch” other young men in the “rye” before they go over the cliff.

LIAR’S POKER, Michael Lewis

This inside account of the gluttony, arrogance, and greed of the Wall Street bond trader culture of the late 1980's became both an instant classic and an authority on the "greed is good" era. The proposed book parallels LIAR'S POKER in that it aims to offer a colorful inside story of a young man's quest to win acceptance into a dominant elite culture—an acceptance subsequently ending in disgust and whistleblowing about outrageous antics. PARTY AT THE END OF THE WORLD seeks to serve as a focal point for discussion about the nation's elite fraternity culture much the same way that Lewis's book summarized an era of out of control Wall Street speculation and its attendant culture of avarice.

I HOPE THEY SERVE BEER IN HELL, Tucker Max

Tucker Max's infamous collection of stories about his debauched drinking and sexual exploits set off an incredible firestorm of both vitriol (that he was a misogynistic nihilist) and boyish admiration (that he was a hero to aspiring bros everywhere). In fact, as a freshman at Dartmouth, I remember gathering many a night in my dorm's common room with other freshman guys to read from the book, and the message board of imitators that it spawned, together. PARTY AT THE END OF THE WORLD parallels I HOPE THEY SERVE BEER IN HELL's subject matter, and will, if published, most likely attract a similar amount of criticism. However, the proposed book has an overarching moral message, and I like to think that I'm not as feculent of a person as Tucker Max. One Dartmouth alumna, the author of BABES IN BOYLAND, has already compared my proposed book to I HOPE THEY SERVE BEER IN HELL, remarking in the Chronicle of Higher Ed that the only difference was that, well, plenty of beer was served in my hell. Contrastingly, PARTY AT THE END OF THE WORLD has more of a coherent plot arc based on traditional storytelling techniques.

GOD AND MAN AT YALE, William F. Buckley

This account of the supposed godlessness and anti-individualism at Yale in the 1950's launched not only Buckley's career as a conservative critic but an entire national conservative movement. Though the writing is fairly dry, and the subject matter may appear irrelevant now in the landscape of a contemporary higher education system that has completely lost its innocence, GOD AND MAN AT YALE has earned lasting cultural relevance, in addition to continuing to sell hundreds of thousands of copies. The proposed book aims to make similar statements about the elite educational zeitgeist, but from a fresher, more engaging, more narrative-driven, and more scandalous point of view.

BRIGHT LIGHTS, BIG CITY, Jay McInerney

McInerney's infamous *bildungsroman* about New York City in the 1980's is arguably one of the most important literary events of a generation. BRIGHT LIGHTS, BIG CITY launched the "brat pack" literary movement that also gave birth to Bret Easton Ellis and Tama Janowitz, and put a young, cool, detached face on literature. PARTY AT THE END OF THE WORLD differs from this book in much of its setting and subject matter, but seeks to parallel the often sad, self-deprecating tone McInerney employs.

HOW TO DRIVE FAST ON DRUGS WHILE GETTING YOUR WING-WANG SQUEEZED AND NOT SPILL YOUR DRINK, P.J. O'Rourke

This famous essay about sex, drugs, and dangerous driving greatly influenced me as a Dartmouth freshman. PARTY AT THE END OF THE WORLD seeks to parallel O'Rourke's voice and this essay's heft as a generational statement.

However, again, my proposed book is not just about bad behavior—it's a narrative ultimately calling for scrutiny and reform of the fraternity culture's excesses.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

VI. Fraternity Term Glossary

Rush: The Greek system's process of selecting pledges to each fraternity and sorority; a very formal two-day event that takes place the second weekend of October whereby sophomores and juniors socialize for two hours at the house(s) where they seek membership. A rushee indicates his preference by "shaking out".

Bid: A slip of paper indicating that a fraternity has extended admission to a student who has rushed.

Shake out: At the end of each night of rush, the brothers of each house form a line in front of the fraternity and the potential pledges leave the house by shaking every brother's hand. Shaking out indicates one's top choice of fraternity; by shaking out, a rushee commits to accepting a bid should one be offered, and submits himself to being kidnapped later that night as the house sees fit.

Bid night: a fraternity's first night of hazing that occurs after bids have been delivered the night of rush.

Sink night: the second hazing night following bid night (typically the subsequent Monday) wherein each pledge, after receiving their bid and undergoing bid night hazing, "sinks" their bid in order to officially become a pledge. SAE's sink night is defined by its infamous kiddie-pool-of-bodily-fluids baptism.

Regina: the pledge name given to me during my sink night baptism, based on the character Regina George, a well dressed, catty social climber from the movie Mean Girls.

Whaleshit: the "title" given to SAE pledges; as in, "whaleshit sinks to the bottom of the ocean; whaleshit is lower than low". The term is almost always used as a pejorative address. Coincidentally, "whaleshit" is also the nickname for junior analysts (pledges, in a sense) at JP Morgan Chase. It is unclear whether the term originated in SAE or JP Morgan.

Doming: A drinking "game" by which two brothers of a fraternity stand over a trashcan chugging beers in a preset amount of time (5, 10, or 15 seconds per beer); the first brother to vomit loses, and the winner has the option of vomiting on the loser's head should the brotherhood begin a chant of "Boot on his head! Boot on his head!" One can also "dome oneself". In this iteration of the game, a lone brother stands over a trashcan chugging beers until he vomits while the brotherhood sings a traditional drinking song.

Boot and rally: A common term in the Dartmouth lexicon—in fraternities and sororities alike—meaning that one has vomited in order to clear one's stomach to continue drinking for the night.

Pong: Dartmouth's idiosyncratic, highly competitive version of "beer pong" played with sawed off ping-pong paddles and four to five times as much beer as the traditional game uses. In this binge drinking version—which has a rather high learning curve and is played religiously at the College—each player drinks as much as seven beers per twenty minute game. Dartmouth's social life hinges on pong, and pong skills are an invaluable social asset.

Line: a waiting list of pairs wishing to "get on table" to play pong at a fraternity.

Hanging Out: Dartmouth students generally don't call "partying" "partying"—they call it "hanging out", perhaps to make their binge drinking appear more casual. The phrase "no one hangs out anymore" is an oft-repeated fraternity culture maxim paralleling Dartmouth's "Lest The Old Traditions Fail" motto. Both of these popular phrases establish that at the College, in the past, things were somehow idyllic, or "better".

Composite: a large framed collection of headshots of all the brothers of a fraternity enumerated with their positions in the house, produced annually and displayed ostentatiously in the house.

VII. Outline and Chapter Summaries

1. A Guy Named, For the Sake of Argument, Thurston Lancaster III

I begin the narrative in the present tense with a March 2012 interview for CBS Inside Edition regarding my experiences as a fraternity brother and my perceptions of the depraved culture that dominates elite institutions like Dartmouth—post blowing the whistle and immediately after the publication of the Rolling Stone story. I use the conceit of talking to the television cameras as a jumping off point for telling the entire story of my illicit education at Dartmouth; the majority of the following chapters are told as an extended flashback recounted in the television studio. (Sample chapter).

2. Bullshit Baffles Brains

I became obsessed with attending Dartmouth College at a very young age—before I even understood what Dartmouth was—from idolizing my grandfather, a graduate of the Class of 1947. He was also an archetypal “good old boy”: a devout brother of Beta Theta Pi, the captain and star of the lacrosse team, and a member of the secret society Casque and Gauntlet. My earliest memories of my grandfather center around his stately home in Short Hills, New Jersey, his preppy haberdashery, and his generally Gatsby-esque existence. I saw in him a parable of the American man that, for me, became transmuted into a parable of the Dartmouth man—and was inextricably linked with fraternity membership and secret society induction. Like many other young men, this sort of identity-by-membership became my main aspiration in seeking Ivy League admission.

My grandfather was largely self-made—rising from a lower middle class existence to opulence, respect, wealth, acculturation and elite club memberships through what I perceived to be his invented persona. He had a saying that resonated with me at a young age: “bullshit baffles brains”. This phrase became my main clue as to how to use charisma to construct an identity that could offer me upward mobility. Though he died when I was fourteen, I attempted to carry on his, and our family’s, mostly-imagined legacy by attending Dartmouth. Later, I was forced to concede that this romantic vision

was more illusion than reality, that I had a personal imperative to reveal its moral bankruptcy and social malignancy.

3. Dear Old Dartmouth Give A Rouse

After being waitlisted by Dartmouth, I was forced to pull strings with my grandfather's college best friend—who had donated a few million dollars to the school—in order to secure a spot in the Class of 2012. This wealthy alumnus and secret society mate of my grandfather promised our family that he'd "talk to his man in admissions"; he delivered on his promise, thus setting up the inherent irony of my Dartmouth experience: admission by nepotism, only to eventually turn my back on the culture's elitism.

I visited my older brother, a '10, at the College a few times, finally acquiescing to take part in his new partying lifestyle. I simultaneously experienced my first sip of liquor and my first victimization by the cognitive dissonance of older Dartmouth boys' trickery: having absolutely no concept of alcohol, it was easy for my brother's friends to goad me into chugging a monstrous glass of whiskey. They laughed hysterically as I vomited—I thought that my throat had been lit on fire—and then came my first Dartmouth bender, under their supervising and encouraging eyes. I returned home to New Jersey feeling as if I had been inducted into some kind of wild secret. I was becoming a Dartmouth man, I knew, somehow believing that sacrificing my abstemious ways for social acceptance was a fair trade.

4. The Coastal Evacuation Route

In this chapter I lay background for my character paralleling my grandfather's: I was just a very ambitious guy from a humble middle class background in suburban Nowhere, New

Jersey. I extrapolate on a teenage love interest and how that romance, and its attendant suburban scenery of highways, strip malls, and the Jersey shore, was aborted by my newfound arrogance when I visited Dartmouth and was subsequently accepted.

This chapter reflects a period of my personal development where my expectations were at their all time high—I was one of the few graduates from my third rate public high school attending an Ivy League school come summer's end. I enjoyed respect from my peers, and for the first time, a sense of popularity; I was already trading on Dartmouth's currency, having scant foreknowledge of the confusing, ritualistic culture into which I would soon disappear. I accepted my brother's friends' alcohol-related guile as simply part of "the game"—and was glad that I had a head start on the other '12s in understanding that game.

Though I was deeply connected to my middle class suburban upbringing, I imagined that I'd soon be too elite for it, that Dartmouth would change me for the better, congruous with my visions of wood-paneled fraternity sitting rooms replete with brothers swilling scotch and debating Socrates or Nietzsche or *The Wealth of Nations*—an illusion of Dartmouth as a hard-drinking intellectual finishing school, the perfect launching pad for my hopeful career in Republican politics.

5. Vision Quest to the Elite Utopia

Dartmouth freshman must undergo a traditional and highly mythologized wilderness orientation called "Trips". This chapter chronicles the strange rituals that I and the other freshmen participated in and how those events begin to shape my subconscious distaste for the phony groupthink and cognitive dissonance that dominate the College's culture. I felt deflated by the seemingly out of place, infantilizing aspects of trips: having to sit on the floor as an upperclassmen read to us from *Green Eggs and Ham*, various pranks

pulled by upper classmen (including the freshman being told to hike into the lodge either naked or in their underwear), and the general fake enthusiasm that all the upperclassmen and freshman seemed to employ to convince everyone that they were, in fact, having the time of their lives.

6. Social Climbing, Rung by Rung

Upon matriculating as a freshman, I immediately went out for the rugby team—and lasted only a week, quitting in shame—and then joined the Dartmouth Review, the school's infamous reactionary right wing paper. I plotted my social ascendancy, much as I had imagined my grandfather doing when first arriving at Dartmouth.

However, I soon found that my long-held conservative beliefs faltered, and, presaging later events, I became a turncoat against the Review and penned a series of columns in the Dartmouth Free Press scorching the Review's pathetic anti-intellectual culture. My writing soon earned me the ire of Sigma Alpha Epsilon, the fraternity that I planned on rushing. I developed a group of close friends among the other boys on my floor; like most freshman, we speculated endlessly about rush, and made a point of religiously hanging out at the fraternities four nights a week in order to network to receive a bid our sophomore fall. However, I was concerned that I would not be accepted into the fraternity of my choice.

7. (Summary Narration, rest of year)

8. Sigma Alpha Epsilon Rah Rah Fuck

For me—and for most of my peers—rushing a fraternity was a foregone conclusion, as being an “unaffiliated” male at Dartmouth is tantamount to social suicide and irrelevance. However, when I quit the Review, I was blackballed at SAE, the fraternity that I had

deeply wanted to rush; many SAEs were also high-ranking Reviewers. After working other connections in the frat for nearly the entire following year—mainly through friends of my brother—I overcame the “ding” against my name and rushed the fraternity in October 2009. This chapter relates rush, my hazing induction experience of receiving a bid (the President of the Review lit my bid card on fire while I chugged six beers, vomiting on myself), and the first hazing I underwent as a pledge.

Like many other young men, not just at Dartmouth’s SAE but at all the College’s fraternities and innumerable fraternities at other schools across the country, I was emotionally and psychologically scarred by my hazing experiences. As a pledge I was renamed both formally (“Regina”) and informally (“whaleshit”, lower than low). I was reprogrammed with a foreign social outlook of misogyny and self-destruction. To be sure, this process did not happen overnight, and I concede that it logically fed into my “ends justify the means” sense of social climbing that was thrust into hyperdrive by my fraternity acceptance. But seven weeks of fraternity boot camp directed most, if not all, of my desires for upward class mobility—and my potent emulation of my grandfather—into the creation of a depressed, drug-addled drunkard, a misguided frat chauvinist who was becoming more of a shadow of himself as each day passed. (Sample chapter)

9. What Happens in the House Stays In The House

This chapter delves further into my hazing experiences over the course of the fraternity’s pledge term, [REDACTED] throughout which pledges become constant hazing victims and indentured servants of the house. During this time the older brothers in the house introduced me to cocaine and whippits, expensive canisters of nitrous oxide that the brothers inhale recreationally to get high. I would soon become addicted to both drugs. The narrative of this chapter deals with the worst hazing my pledge class underwent, how it was kept secret (including how the administration attempted to investigate us but the frat outfoxed them), and how my longtime Dartmouth girlfriend

broke up with me, and had her roommate's boyfriend beat me up, after I came to her room, in women's underwear (part of a hazing event and not a function of my usual wardrobe), fucked up post-being hazed. During this time my mother left my father. My brother and I were incredibly depressed. I "passed" pledge term with flying colors and became a brother.

This was not the first time that I had noted an inverse relationship between success in the fraternity and personal fulfillment. Although I routinely completed the hazing tasks I was assigned, they all seemed, at face value, empty and only meaningful in the sense that I had "survived" on a social level instead of "thriving" on a human level. I plunged on regardless, allowing myself to be sucked into the frat's vortex of hyper-masculinity and believing that I was "supposed" to want what I was told to want: the nebulously defined "honor" of brotherhood. I believed wrongly that, unlike my frat brothers, I could retain part of myself in the frat's Faustian bargain.

10. Rush Chair Election

Since I had proven myself to be an impeccable, loyal pledge, I declared my candidacy to run for rush chairman, a prominent position within the house responsible for recruiting freshmen to rush during the subsequent fall term. This position required an intense schedule of drinking with underclassmen boys, and constant promotion of fraternity life as an indispensable element of the "Dartmouth experience". Though I ran on my strong record of embracing my hazing and doing endless chores for my older brothers, many were still skeptical about me and tried to swing the election against me, but the result was a literal tie between me and my nemesis in the pledge class— [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

The brotherhood decided to take both of us on as rush chairmen. From that position I further plotted my social ascendancy, including planning out how I would run for the

presidency of the house, and trying to politick for a coveted secret society tap. I began “hanging out extra hard” with freshman boys to convince them to rush the frat.

That winter, while coked out, I was kicked out of a sorority formal and was almost beaten up by a bouncer for telling him that “my bowtie could buy his whole family”—it was an event that so deeply scarred me, that felt so deeply wrong to me, that I shudder to even include it in this book proposal. I began to realize that my fraternity identity was overtaking who I really was, but felt powerless to turn myself around.

11. I Got Punched In The Face By The Son of A Billionaire College Trustee

In the spring of my sophomore year, my second Dartmouth girlfriend—whom I met doing coke for the first time in chapter 8—and a fellow ’12 brother and I snorted coke from a framed picture of my grandfather at Dartmouth, channeling his enraged spirit from limbo. We did not realize that the clock had passed midnight and that it was the next day, April Fool’s Day, my grandfather’s death day six years earlier.

I went back to the frat and partied until around five AM when a few brothers of a rival fraternity showed up asking to play pong. Our pong game descended into a strange fit of masculine violence, including a “dome” drinking game where the first cups were urine (mine—my best friend drank the cups). I got into a physical altercation with one of the rival frat brothers and later realized that he was the son of a trustee. He punched me in the face. The cops were called.

Later, I had to answer to a College administrator, Associate Dean of Student Life April Thompson, about the event, but declined to press College charges against the billionaire trustee’s son, knowing it to be social suicide if not plain futile. The fight was one of my first potent revelations about the reservoir of nihilism lurking not just within the fraternity but within myself; it terrified me. I needed someone to listen to my story and to know if the administration knew the depravities that transpired by rote. I explained to Thompson

my observations on the frat culture and we began a cordial relationship about frat reform which would later turn sour. The event was my first small epiphany—and also my first repressed epiphany.

12. Quebec City

Realizing that my fight with the billionaire had cost me my shot of winning the presidency, I ran instead for summer social chairman and lost badly—getting only one vote, [REDACTED] and was voted down for literally every other minor position. Mortified, I decided to leave town the following weekend with my girlfriend, telling the brothers that they “wouldn’t have Andrew Butler Lohse to kick around anymore.” We believed we were being prudent by leaving our stash of cocaine behind. We borrowed a friend’s Lexus SUV and headed north to Quebec City where we had booked a room at the Chateau Frontenac, an iconic luxury hotel where I stayed once as a child.

We arrived to find that, like many childhood memories, the hotel was not as luxurious as remembered, or was at least in a state of disrepair. What ensued was a romantic and debauched weekend, the eye of the storm of that spring. When we returned to campus I was forced to pull two consecutive all-nighters to write my midterm papers early in order to party hard for Green Key, Dartmouth’s big spring weekend. Then the coke came out again.

13. Green Key: *Lord Of The Flies Redux*

This chapter deals with the cocaine bust at my fraternity in May 2010, the vitriolic and violent response targeted at the bust’s whistleblower, my interrogation by detectives, and my role in the “witness tampering” that took place in the fraternity to cover up these events.

The sad irony was that even though the police had tested the wrong picture frame for cocaine—we had scrubbed clean the frame from which we had snorted the drug—their test returned positive, as a majority of all frames in the “crime scene” room were caked in cocaine residue due to the drug’s widespread abuse in the fraternity.

Later, I spat on [REDACTED], the whistleblower ([REDACTED]), and poured a beer on his door. Others broke into his room and peed on his socks and even set fire to a beautiful wooden table he had just made. The flame’s brackish cloud of smoke enveloped the frat house like some scene from *Lord of the Flies* around five am one morning after an enraged house-wide bender. Brothers, who would later go on to jobs at prestigious Wall Street banks, posed for pictures next to the burning table, holding the axes, sledge hammers, and chainsaw they had used to destroy it.

The alumni who had returned to Dartmouth for Green Key spent the entire weekend literally tearing apart the house—ripping out walls in the basement that [REDACTED] had renovated, threatening him with a sledge hammer, etc. Carnage ensued. I felt very guilty about mistreating [REDACTED] that way, but the clan’s thinking seemed to justify not only me but the entire group’s condemnable misbehavior.

14. Turning Ourselves In, Telling Our Parents, Making Pacts

A week after the bust we learned via email from Hanover PD that a judge had put out warrants for our arrests, and that if we didn’t turn ourselves in willingly the authorities would come looking for us. We were devastated by this news and huddled together in the frat house bedroom of two of the perpetrators to cry together, call our parents, and plan our course.

Whatever progress I had made in the aftermath of my encounter with the [REDACTED] pugilistic son evaporated. Instead of accepting the humility that being arrested could’ve

imbued in me, I doubled down on the fraternity's self-justifying secrecy and strength of brotherhood as a means to protect myself. We all made a blood pact not to rat on each other. We dressed up in our typical Ivy League attire of khakis, oxfords, rep ties, and loafers—like a bunch of kempt Charlie Sheens—and turned ourselves in to the authorities the next day. I made sure to smile for my mug shot.

15. Dragon's Gate, No Lo Contendere, Vox Clamantis en Parkhurst

As our case progressed, I remained at Dartmouth that summer taking classes for the school's traditional "sophomore summer" semester. I hired a top local lawyer—who confided to me that he had done whippits with ██████████ at Princeton, which I greatly respected—and prepared to fight the case.

In July, I got the fraternity's secret tattoo inked into my ribcage. The other brothers charged with me in the scandal also had the tattoo, as did the whistleblower, so I decided that it would only be right to close the circuit. That same month I pled no lo contendere to lesser charges and paid a large fine. I was sentenced to ten days in the house of corrections suspended for good behavior—good behavior that didn't last very long, but I was never sent to prison.

In August I was "Parkhursted" (suspended) by the College, and my fraternity won "Masters", the main event of sophomore summer: a pong tournament between all the fraternities. I left campus the day after the tournament, hungover and personally shattered, to serve my suspension.

16. Spalding Would Later Claim That He Received No Such Dossier

In August I moved in with my mom, who had just finalized her divorce from my father and was living in a cramped rental house in Brattleboro, VT. My brother was also living there; he had withdrawn from Dartmouth on an involuntary medical leave two weeks

before his graduation in 2010 to address the habit of drug and alcohol abuse he developed as a fraternity brother. He and I reflected over our awful experiences and how we could move forward.

In October, while the 2010 SAE pledge term raged unabated, my brother and his boyfriend suggested that I write an expose of Dartmouth's frat culture. At first I balked at the idea—I still clung to a dim hope of returning to the College and SAE, and did not yet have the conviction to publicly shame the fraternity's sordid doings. Nonetheless, after rigorous debate with my brother and his boyfriend, I made a dossier about hazing and arranged a secret meeting with two high level administrators—Dean April Thompson and Vice President and Presidential Chief of Staff, David Spalding. I figured that all I could offer at that time was behind the scenes work on the hazing issue. The duo promised action but did little to nothing; in fact, Spalding went so far as to tip off SAE that Hanover Police was arranging a sting of one of their hazing events. He later denied that I showed him any kind of dossier.

As my efforts to work with administration faltered, I pulled out of a large scale media expose organized by my brother's boyfriend—via reporters for the Boston Globe and New York Times—at the last moment. I just didn't have the courage to change yet, and my ambivalence paralyzed me. I resolved to shelve the issue and conceded that I had no choice but return to the toxic environment after my suspension had been served, perhaps trying to fix things from within at a later date, though full well suspecting that I would fall prey to its nihilistic charms yet again.

I embarked on a backpacking trip through Southeast Asia with my brother from February to April 2011. During this time I attempted to follow up with the two Dartmouth administrators about their continued efforts regarding hazing but did not receive any responses.

While sitting on the bank of the Mekong River in Laos, my brother and I hatched a plan to try the expose again at some point in the future—on a bigger scale, once I had the courage, though I doubted that I ever would.

17. Panarchy: Bedbugs, Coke, Rebounds

In June 2011, having served my suspension, I returned to Dartmouth and joined Panarchy—a coed society for counterculture types. Though I had been deeply changed by my experiences, I was still nominally involved with SAE and often hung out there and bought kegs for the younger brothers. During this time I rediscovered coke—including an epic binge on the 4th of July—and generally came to accept that I had failed to learn the lessons that I should have learned from my experiences. I continued partying, acting like an elitist prick, and bedding sorority sisters like it was nobody's business.

18. The Most Talked About Man On Wall Street

That summer an SAE '13 assumed the role of executive editor of The Dartmouth. Upon hearing him say, at SAE's meetings, that he was looking for someone to pen a one-off guest column for the paper, I volunteered my inflammatory writing. I warned him: be careful what you wish for.

My column, "A Corporate Stranglehold", excoriated the College's corporate recruiting culture and went viral, earning me the moniker, at the frat's next meetings, of "the most talked about man on Wall Street"—a title that I was forced to perform a feat of binge drinking to officially receive. In drawing the co-CEO of the world's largest hedgefund into a war of words in the school paper, I succeeded in highlighting the corrupting influence of corporate recruiting practices on the campus.. For the first time in a while, I felt slightly hopeful that writing could be an effective tool for good.

19. Reverse Mischief; Cracks Appearing

At the end of the summer, one of my best friends in SAE—who had been off-campus doing a corporate consulting internship that summer—returned to Dartmouth for a three day bender we had planned. The bender culminated with a massive drinking and prescription drug binge one night—and a spraypaint assault on our own frat, a rival frat, and an expensive sculpture located between the two.

As Hurricane Irene hit New England, we dressed in costumes to hide our identities and braved the storm to attempt removal of the paint; we called the act “reverse mischief”.

We failed, and later had to pay the rival fraternity a hefty ransom in exchange for their promise that they wouldn’t report us to the College. I would have been expelled if they did—and we didn’t necessarily believe that they wouldn’t.

The next night, my friend, roommate, and one of the many girls I was sleeping with at the time huddled together in the attic of Panarchy to talk about how to protect me. I can’t believe that they all cared so much about me when I clearly cared so little about myself. At that moment, I realized that cracks were appearing in my identity, that I could barely keep myself together. The next night I overdosed on Ritalin in the library and when I returned to Panarchy and forced those friends to sit and listen as I read aloud the entire first four chapters of *Bright Lights, Big City*. At the end I burst into tears. They all thought I was going crazy. They were right. I was seriously coming apart at the seams.

20. Pledge Term Take Two

That fall, my ostensible “senior fall”, I moved into a single in a dorm. I had never lived alone before and was incredibly depressed and anxious. To make matters worse, my large bay window overlooked the College graveyard—not exactly an optimistic view for

someone sporadically considering offing himself. These suicidal urges corresponded to my guilt at having fallen prey to Dartmouth's noxious fraternity culture yet again, even though I knew it was deeply wrong and knew that I was acting duplicitously in trying to change it yet actively participating in it. My role of double agent ground me down, especially since the administration appeared to be treating me highly disingenuously—I felt like Costigan from Scorsese's *The Departed*, hung out to dry, trusted neither by the criminal nor the authorities.

Though I was succeeding in the classroom (my honors thesis proposal was accepted) and succeeding in trying to jumpstart a writing career (having columns placed in the New York Daily News and The Harvard Crimson in addition to continuing at The Dartmouth), my drinking was again spiraling out of control.

And then pledge term for the '14s began. Despite my newfound strong moral aversion to hazing, I succumbed to the group pressure and became an especially harsh hazer, earning a reputation as a charming psychopath. I loathed the persona that had overtaken me, but I couldn't stop. I rode shotgun for the bid night kidnappings and actively engaged in the sink night kiddie pool hazing—even peeing in cups and throwing them at the pledges as they were “baptized” in the pool.

21. The Crack-Up; Bleeding Green

This chapter deals with my second arrest, subsequent departure from the college, entrance into rehab and the beginnings of my search for personal absolution. The solitude of this three month period allowed me to finally reflect on the fact that I had sacrificed who I was and what I valued. Through an ongoing dialogue with family, my rehab counselor, my therapist, and an older Dartmouth alum who publishes a truth-telling blog on the College's culture, I embarked on a period of self-evaluation. Also, during this time, I, of all people, began regularly attending a church again for the first time since age nine. I

developed a close relationship with my priest and spoke candidly with her about my fraternity experience and how it had seemingly wrecked my life.

The sum of all of these dialogues was not just the belief that I could forgive others—the fraternity brothers—but that I could forgive myself and that I could take action to ensure that no other well-meaning young men would be hurt by depraved experiences like mine. Slowly but consistently, my rediscovered faith redeemed my previous nihilism. I realized that it was inherent neither to myself nor the world at large but was a function of a twisted environment that could be absolved. Although Christianity had rung false to me for a long time, I began a faith journey marked by my subsequent confirmation into the Episcopal Church (May 2012), which was the first ecstatic religious experience of my life. (Sample chapter).

22. Telling The Truth

In January 2012, about three months after I had left Dartmouth on medical leave, I, through the encouragement of my brother and the alum blogger, finally summoned the courage to write my column about hazing—and aimed for the full blown national media expose that I had lacked the courage to pull off in 2010. This time around I had more distance from the frat, more of a desire to truly change for the better, and a more scandalous story, as I could show that the administration was not only complacent on the hazing issue, but complicit in it.

I was no longer afraid that my own mistakes were damning (I believe this sense of shame is the reason why so few speak up about their hazing experiences); through imagining my own absolution, I imagined that the absolution of the culture itself was also possible. Additionally, my sustained sobriety and evolved view of substance abuse—I no longer saw it as heroic, as my fraternity had taught me—gave me a free-thinking lucidity and a belief in a higher purpose. And, perhaps self deprecatingly, I guess you could say that

many Christian parables convinced me of the virtue of self-martyrdom for a higher purpose.

As most students on The Dartmouth's directorate are affiliated with a frat or sorority, and since the College's secrecy culture is self-policing, the editors at the paper threatened to shelve the first draft of my column or cut it altogether. To one-up their threats I leaked an unedited first draft to DartBlog, a popular alumni-run blog, and stoked a witch hunt within The Dartmouth about the source of leak. The leak quickly caused a reverberation; a media firestorm began before the actual column had even landed in the paper and the anticipation and outrage over the leak forced The Dartmouth's hand.

The paper then spent five days rigorously fact-checking the column, which, even for "the oldest college newspaper in America," is a rarity. When they printed the final, edited version, the national media scrutiny exploded and the column was linked to and read so frequently that it has been the number one read article on The Dartmouth's website for four straight months and counting.

23. Confessions of An Ivy League Frat boy

A few weeks into the media blitz over "Telling The Truth" I received a call from Janet Reitman, a contributing editor for Rolling Stone. Janet related to me that a former writer for the magazine—who had become an English professor at Dartmouth—had alerted Rolling Stone's editor-in-chief about the potential of the hazing story, and that the editor had given Janet the assignment.

This chapter deals with the many weeks I spent interviewing with Janet, the slew of negative and positive responses to my column that I was receiving by the hour, and some fears for my safety. Having known firsthand the harsh and often violent treatment a whistleblower in my fraternity had received in the past (because I had played a role in

intimidating him), my mother alerted the local police, who promised to keep a watch on our house as the situation developed.

Later, I had to cope with Reitman's finished piece, "Confessions of an Ivy League Fratboy". The article's publication became a cathartic reflection point in my life, allowing me to look back on who I had been, how I had gotten so far from my roots, how I had lost myself in a violent, invented identity. For the first time in years my conscience was clear. Having rather publicly crucified myself, telling the truth at a great personal cost, I no longer had anything to hide—and it wouldn't have been possible to hide anything about myself anyway. That sensation was strangely liberating.

24. Return To Suburbia

This chapter reverts to present tense with the completion of the extended flashback during the television interview. I then chronicle my personal growth from this ordeal, my attempts to try to sort out who I am, who I was, and why I pursued the expose in the way that I did—I reflect on my experience. I purchase a 1996 Buick Roadmaster station wagon with wood paneling and drive back to my hometown in New Jersey where I meet up with childhood friends; they say that they knew I was becoming a monster at Dartmouth, that I wasn't myself, that they were glad I was back. I make amends.

My anxieties about whether what I did was right or wrong, whether I was a hero or snitch, are quelled by the profound welcome I receive in my hometown. Finally, I find that I feel like Andrew again—not Lohse. Driving around in the Buick, which to me comes to represent a lost, dying American dream, I have an epiphany about my generation's identity.

25. Epilogue

This chapter will function as a conclusion of the work.

VIII. Sample Chapters

A Guy Named, For The Sake of Argument, Thurston Lancaster III

Sigma Alpha Epsilon, Rah Rah Fuck

April Fool's Day, I Got Punched In The Face By A Billionaire

Rush Chair Election

Green Key: Lord of The Flies Redux

Dragon's Gate, No Lo Contendere, Vox Clamantis En Parkhurst

Bleeding Green

A GUY NAMED, FOR THE SAKE OF ARGUMENT, THURSTON LANCASTER
III

You really get yourself into trouble when you start to tell the truth. Really, I swear to God, I'm saying to the producer, I'm not the kind of guy who would ever vomit on his friends or spit on an Iraq war veteran out of malice or stand by idly singing some drinking song as my best friend was forced to chug cups of vinegar until he vomited blood on his boat shoes in broad daylight for losing his pledgebook, that book I told you about that we had to carry around all term to write down brothers' answers when we asked them what it was like losing their virginites, what their home phone numbers were,

first page said something like “WHAT HAPPENS IN THE HOUSE STAYS IN THE HOUSE”—that’s what I scribbled drunk when the pledge trainers were barking the rules at us that second night of hazing. They called it “Pledge Education”, which makes me think of grade school or some kind of political campaign slogan, like: “A Pledge To Keep To America.”

That rule about keeping secrets was the only one out of the litany that I really caught loud and clear. Pretty funny how bad I am at taking orders like that even though I was always good in school. The only rule I wrote down couldn’t have been more blatant but here I am in a high rise in midtown telling all of this to a bunch of fiendish media people. Like, who knew this type of incredible irony even existed, right?

I’m a pretty normal kid, I’m telling her while I nervously brush my hair to one side because I’m not sure how well defined the side part is or should be, I’m a joiner as they say, kind of socially ambitious, but I always find that I can never stay joined for very long, like maybe something is just wrong with me and I always walk away from group experiences very disgusted. In this case the disgust was both literal and figurative and I just couldn’t pretend that it all hadn’t happened anymore. It was always hard for me to fit in as a kid and maybe this story is no different, just another guy who couldn’t bend his will to the clan for very long and just snapped. Nice kids are getting broken all the time. It’s really too bad. Like, this was one of those situations where the rich kids made us throw up all the time to get into their secret club only to find out that their secret club was just a bunch of rich kids throwing up all the time. But the secret handshake was pretty cool—and the clubhouse was basically a mansion. I’ve always been intrigued by clubby people because I knew I could never be one of them, even though my grandfather was a pretty clubby guy; not sure how anyone with one quarter of my DNA could deal with it all, right, that’s what I’m saying. Bullshit baffles brains. That’s what he always told me. His khakis always fit him flawlessly.

I try to laugh but my voice cracks and she, the producer, is just kind of laughing awkwardly too because I can sense that she believes me and she knows that this whole fucking thing is a few shades stranger than fiction, no one could make it up if they bothered trying—it's like a century of bad behavior and adolescent imagination distilled into a few nights, like, you know it goes beyond just one single guy. And I really doubt that one single guy could change it very much but I earnestly hope so, I mean, that's why I'm here in my best suit jacket which I forgot to get dry cleaned and a pair of jeans, trying to look relaxed but sophisticated I guess but in reality the pants that match the jacket don't fit me anymore. No money to buy a new suit, no need for one I guess because I don't have job interviews or go to fancy parties like I once did so this ill-fitting jacket with its slim lapels is enough to get me through the few dinner dates I can afford to have these days with pretty girls and things like this where I have to go on TV. She's just nodding. I wish I could sit down in any one of these chairs but if I did it would be awkward because she would still be standing and I wouldn't know what to do with my hands.

To be honest this is my first experience with television, I say. Another forced laugh and of course my voice cracks. I am very nervous and keep chewing fresh pieces of Nicorette gum. Not like I smoke much, it was a habit I tried and failed to cultivate as a frat boy, but right now my hands are kind of shaking and I hope she hasn't noticed. As usual this conversation is mostly just me talking, apologizing for things that aren't relevant anymore. Maybe Rolling Stone was right when they wrote that I was self-effacing. Is that a bad thing? I got pretty tired of trying to seem so above the fray all the time, floating through frat basements and taking too many girls home and just generally pretending that everything meant nothing to me when I'm really pretty moral and boring and would rather be in bed reading poetry, Walt Whitman or Carl Sandburg or something, or maybe someone saccharine like Bob Hass—*"All the new thinking is about loss"*—all of my thinking is about my loss. My middle class Christian suburban guilt complex gets the better of me even though my parents stopped taking me to church when I was nine and I only recently started going again on my own—yeah, of course, the producer says, making

some kind of gesture to indicate that I should probably stop talking. One of those things where the person you're talking to suddenly begins to slightly avert eye contact. I realize that it is very cold in this room. Are you chilly? I ask her quietly. I don't think she hears me. Lesson learned. All conversations with Manhattan media fiends grind to a halt at first mention of Jesus Christ.

This brisk temperature is making me more anxious than the fact that in a few short minutes I will have to go in front of the cameras for the first time. I still can't decide if what I did to deserve this scrutiny was good or bad. Like most things, it was probably a little bit of both—you grasp the tragic with the gorgeous. Moral judgments like these have always taken me a while, but somehow, I always end up knowing that I've done the right thing. I always hit a point where I realize that righteousness does exist. Is it like that for everyone? I've always wanted to believe that righteousness has its own gravity, like, you're never really going to escape no matter how deep you go into the darkness because the future will rearrange itself and bring you right back to where you should have been all along and the difference that shift produces makes you grow up. Sometimes this process comes with a great personal cost. And so it is. Call me a law-abiding Republican again, like I was as a kid, like my dad and my grandfathers were, those men, my heroes, until I gave up credence in patriarchy after losing all faith in fraternity and gaining it in myself instead. That's when I started to idolize my mom. Male friendships always seem to go wrong.

But then I start thinking, maybe this is all just a cheap defense, one that the collagen-injected television host will see right through. Three months ago, I snitched on my fraternity brothers in a very public way. They were hurting people. The vitriol I've faced since then has made me question my sanity but right now it's too cold in here to think about anything beside the fact that my barely-enameled teeth are chattering wildly. I read online last week that chewing too much Nicorette basically kills your teeth, and between that and all the vomiting I've done my dentist is very concerned, so he says, about the state of my teeth. He even asked if I was bulimic—I just said, no, like, I pledged a frat,

but he didn't get it. I make a mental note to try to take up chain smoking again, coughing at the thought.

I've done some pretty sorry things and watched silently as others committed terrible acts in the name of fraternity or tradition or secrecy, but because I forgive myself I can forgive them. All of them. Because I've come to believe—at least at this moment—that air conditioning is the real root moral corruption of our generation, not violence or self-destruction, even though those are the things about which I am actually here to talk. Our spiritual crisis has not been caused by our cultural sense of boring post-MTV apocalyptic doom and sadly, I don't believe that if the world ended tomorrow any of us would even notice that it was gone. And the problem here is not even the childhood trauma of watching, on endless repeat from our comfortable living rooms, the twin towers collapse into a cloud of dust. No—it is the cold air. We're all a strange case. Maybe, just maybe, at some point in the future, we will stop damaging each other in the way that my culture damaged me. And maybe we'll accept that it is okay to let our bodies sweat a little bit more liberally. Forgive me, I say, my pits have soaked through this jacket already. I'm swimming in anxiety.

This is what I am thinking about as I wait in the conference room of a television studio in midtown Manhattan, standing in front of a floor to ceiling glass window looking out across the Hudson at New Jersey. I arrived late, as I usually do, this time to the taping of my own big name interview about that fraternity hazing expose I've done. My tardiness bore no excuse. I simply took my time hailing a cab outside of my hotel because it was such a serene day. When I entered the building, the documentary filmmaker who has been following me since I first went public with my vile story greeted me nervously, as if there were some terrible reason why I was late. There was no reason, I told her in the elevator, staring directly into her camera lens. I could see her fidget behind the camera. Floors ticked by. She asked excitedly if I had been looking over my notes in the cab. I didn't have any notes, I told her.

Across the river in New Jersey I imagine what all of my childhood friends are doing right now. I picture the smokestack on my elementary school. Like, seriously, what kind of world is this where elementary schools have smokestacks? But those friends, they are probably all still caught there in the suburbs somewhere. It's all a really tangled mess—strip malls and clone homes, road head and cheeseburgers. Just as we get further from nature with every wave of fake cold air we eventually forget all the things that made us people, the simple things before our acculturation. We begin to behave like the firms we aspire to work for: lawless, ends always justifying the means. I had wanted to give up that whole suburban wasteland I knew for a very specific type of Ivy League acculturation, one which, despite my best efforts, my body rejected like a black market kidney transplant. I passed pledge term and became a brother but got red F's written all over everything else. You'll never be one of us, the culture said. I'm finally ready to say so fucking what. Crucify me if you're so inclined. I'm just going to call it like I see it.

I wish these were the things I were here to talk to the corporate media about because I am beginning to tire of answering questions about how I snorted coke in a mansion, swam in piss, sobered up in handcuffs and was kicked out of my Ivy League school twice—and then farmed out everyone else's bad behavior as a consumable spectacle. I'd tell the corporate media that I'd trade it all for a good blue collar job, a clean split level on a cul-de-sac, and two healthy kids who aren't complete morons. Being a plumber sounds great right about now. But there is a subtle connection between what I would like to tell the television interviewer and what he will undoubtedly ask me, after the producer leads me out of this fluorescent jail cell of a room, after my makeup is applied and I begin to quiver in the stale, windowless studio room.

Eventually the producer says all right, yeah, Paul is ready for you down the hall, and her vapid expression mimics the tastelessness of the room, its glossy black table, the leather chairs. Wasn't Paul one of the Apostles? Everything in the room has an indescribable silver hue. I just want to stare out this window at New Jersey a little while longer but it is time for the interview, she says, so I follow her down a few winding hallways and some

women coat my cheeks with powder and soon I am miked and I look at the interviewer and see his shit-eating grin. His face is frozen that way. Occupational hazard. White lights blink on over my face as the sound guy looks me over apathetically. He's seen this all before, he's thinking, just another spoiled little asshole who gets to go on TV and say that it wasn't his fault and extol the virtues of rehab and newfound Christian forgiveness. He's probably a Catholic. Catholics are always riding the rest of us in the Father's name. Someone behind me begins a countdown. The interviewer fixes me with a look that tries and fails to say you are the most interesting person who has ever sat in that chair.

We go live. The questions start again. I try my best to look serious and explain what exactly it was that got me to this point, try to contextualize my arrests, to hold up my hand on an invisible bible and swear that the story of my illicit education at Dartmouth is true—to the best of my knowledge, which I admit to be incomplete due to long stretches of silent stupor, drunken memories with no sound, incomplete pictures of sorority girls' faces floating in the ether.

One of my creative writing professors at Dartmouth told me once that the story changes depending on how you say it. That was easy enough for me to understand. He also tried to instill in me that the unreliable narrator is a cheap conceit to be avoided at all costs. I have found it more difficult to commit to that suggestion; without that trope I could never tell this story, because I was so unreliable, because when you drink the way I did memory itself is often insufficient and the acidic aftertaste of whiskey in the afternoon demands a reconstruction of earlier events by all means other than recall. Major events are reconstructed secondhand, knit together from hearsay or wayward emails or nonsensical text messages.

My name is Andrew, I say earnestly, and I was hazed as a Sigma Alpha Epsilon pledge. Paul plays a clip from Animal House. I laugh and tell him that what I went through makes that movie look like Saturday morning cartoons. I used to love watching cartoons with my brother. Paul stops smirking. For some reason I just can't stop talking so I tell

the cameras, you know, I'm not rich, I'm not exceptionally talented, and I'm not as good looking as I like to believe. I'm no good at squash, have never once played golf aside from the kind with windmills and pirate ships at the Jersey Shore, and can barely chug a beer in half a minute. My preppy clothes don't have the same tasteful fraying that indicates the indifferent lockjaw prestige of a guy named, for the sake of argument, Thurston Lancaster III, the kind of guy I knew at Dartmouth. The kind of guy who could pause a civilized conversation about credit default swaps and high end real estate to vomit his heart out on cheap champagne into the trashcan next to you without missing a word, all the while making an unmistakably supercilious gesture to indicate that he *is* listening to what you're saying, so *please* continue to remark on the meaningless bullshit about the Greenwich real estate market you learned from driving around neighborhoods where you could never afford to live.

Paul asks some meaningless follow-ups about how he knew it was a childhood dream of mine to attend Dartmouth College, how my grandfather and brother had matriculated there before me, all the details that had been sensationalized in the Rolling Stone piece. My grandfather, I say, he was my hero, but I've recently been laboring under an extreme amount of guilt about how my larger than life misbehavior has caused him great discomfort from rolling in his grave. He was a very particular man, and for very particular men, there is nothing worse than a little discomfort when you are trying to relax undisturbed for eternity.

SIGMA ALPHA EPSILON, RAH RAH FUCK

October's second Saturday—men's rush—arrived with the sort of reverence and anxiety reserved on most college campuses for commencement. An entire year's worth of adolescent social jockeying would reach its culmination in the shakeout lines outside each fraternity; dirty deals and pledge trading were being finalized. All the liquor the pledges would drink had been picked up from Stinson's. All the garbage cans they would boot in had been relined. Despite my networking dinners with ■■■■■, ■■■■■, and ■■■■■, my

admittance into SAE was far from definite; I heard that [REDACTED] still intended to blackball me.

#

Back in our room in Wheeler, immediately after shakeout, two brothers from Tri-Kap came to deliver my bid, a slip of paper embossed with a picture of the fraternity and made official by the sloppy, childish signature of the house's president. I talked to them in the hallway and thanked them but said that I had shaken out at SAE and was waiting to hear back from that house.

Not long after there was a rap on the door. It was a knock that had undoubtedly been practiced. [REDACTED] opened the door cautiously. The rapping fist became a pointed finger and its owner's Aryan face froze into a serious, high-cheekboned scowl framed ominously over the letters sewn to his sweatshirt: SAE. He quietly demanded that [REDACTED] and I find blindfolds, hand him our phones, and follow him—silently. We assented.

Outside of the dorm a few cars idled on North College Street as groups of fraternity brothers in dark suits paced the shadows. The brother led us to a silver Nissan that I recognized as [REDACTED] car and instructed us to climb into the back seat where there was already one rushee sitting, blindfolded, clutching a tiki torch and nearly quivering with excitement, uncertain fear, validation. I didn't recognize him. He could have been any of the boring white guys with boat shoes that I had meet at rush who had been introduced to me as my potential future brothers and best friends. It seemed unlikely to me that men like these, devoid of any notable personality, could become my closest confidants; it struck me then that shared torture didn't yield close bonds. But that didn't matter. We wanted the torture. It was so close we could taste it.

And then we did taste the torture we craved and it was the bottles of Kiwi Lemon Mad Dog 20/20 thrust into our hands, it tasted like homelessness and rags, a cocktail of cleaning fluids and lost privilege. The re-education had begun. [REDACTED] threw the car into reverse and with a screech and abrupt turn we were gone, soaring through the empty night, glow of the luminous full moon searing the edges of our blindfolds. It soon became difficult to count turns or guess the passage of time. It was impossible to count the bars of the endless loop of the Beethoven symphony shaking the car's weak speakers—it was impossible to guess the time by the number of cigarettes smoked from the passenger seat, vapor stinging our faces... Soon the sound of gravel and dirt roads indicated that we were no longer in the Ivy-covered civilization we had barely begun to know. We were somewhere lost in Eleazar Wheelock's vast forest, hurtling towards our new selves. The car stopped. Someone banged on the windows. I dropped my empty Mad Dog on the floor.

The door opened and a set of hands reached in and pulled me out. I was led up a wooded path with my hand on what I assumed to be a brother's shoulder, tripping on logs and branches. Up the trail I heard strange mumblings that became louder as we approached them. The brother I was following stopped as the trail leveled out. It occurred to me that I had never gone hiking in penny loafers before.

"Take off your blindfolds," a voice said. It was [REDACTED] effete Virginia drawl. I obliged and saw a group of ten rushees encircling a tiki torch thrust into the soft ground, its small flame lighting their expressionless faces with a flickering orange glow. We were in a clearing in the woods, but I had no idea where or how long it had taken to get there, and I didn't recognize most of the men assembled. A few brothers stood with [REDACTED] all wearing their finest formal attire and appearing to be very serious, very concerned. Their stoic faces seemed to say: ritualistic initiations are no trifling matter.

"Gentlemen, congratulations on your decision to shake out at Sigma Alpha Epsilon. This evening you will be given a series of challenges to assess your worthiness of being accepted into our pledge class. We will begin with a short quiz on your

knowledge of the fraternity,” [REDACTED] said with a smirk, “[REDACTED], could you please distribute the exam to these gentlemen?”

When all the quizzes had been passed out the brothers walked back down the trail in silent procession with [REDACTED] as the lead. I stared at my paper dumbfounded, clutching it against a cold wind that blew through the clearing. All the questions except two were factual about the fraternity and I simply didn’t know a single answer. One of the other two question asked which other man present we thought least deserved a bid. Without much hesitation I scribbled “[REDACTED]”, a guy whom I didn’t know well—but who had hooked up with [REDACTED], my girlfriend. The last was a short answer opinion question: “What would you do if you found out one of your brothers was addicted to cocaine?” I sloppily hazarded a guess that I would talk to that individual privately, or maybe suggest to him one of the College’s drug abuse counseling options. It felt tongue in cheek to say so. I briefly contemplated writing that, fuck it, I’d be there grinding lines with him to find out how it felt—how could I help him if I didn’t myself know?

We paired off and used each others’ backs to answer the questions. Our first exercise in teamwork came when a maladroit rushee bumped into the tiki torch and the light went out. After that we passed around one rushee’s iPhone, which had somehow evaded confiscation, to use as a light. When we had all finished the test we started back down the trail. We made nervous jokes to one another. At the end of the trail we reached a gravel lot where the rushees were split up again and [REDACTED] was waiting for me with [REDACTED], still blindfolded, and the other blindfolded rushee who had been in our car. [REDACTED] removed their blindfolds and led us down another path. I recognized the other guy as [REDACTED], a less than amiable former colleague of mine at the Review. His beady eyes suggested a nervous disdain of my presence. At the end of the second trail [REDACTED], between drags on his Camel, handed each of us a bottle of Boones.

“You all passed the quiz. Now we have an even more important assessment of your fitness to pledge.”

I was not sure how he could have known that I passed the quiz—I was still holding it in my hands. Likewise, neither [REDACTED] nor [REDACTED] had been with the quiz group in the clearing. For the first time I suspected that nothing we were being asked to do mattered. It was a thought I forced to the back of my mind. After all the time I had spent trying to overcome being blackballed to get into this fraternity, and the time I assumed I'd soon be spending as a pledge, it was not possible to consider that it all didn't matter.

"We made a mistake tonight. We gave out too many bids. In fact, we have only two bids to give for the three of you," [REDACTED] continued, "So we are going to have to settle this matter using a technique deeply important to the brothers of the house." The bottle quivered in my hands. [REDACTED] paused and stamped out his cigarette on the trail.

"Whoever drinks the Boones slowest will have to be taken home. Begin." We hesitated, unsure if that meant that we should start chugging. I looked at [REDACTED] quizzically. "Did I fucking stutter?" he asked. That was enough affirmation for me—I tore the cap off the bottle and began pouring its contents down my throat, coughing on the drink's foul flavor. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] did the same. There was no way I would lose, I thought to myself, simply no way, even if it didn't really matter—

#

On our way back to campus we didn't have to wear the blindfolds. As the car pulled out of the woods, off the dirt roads, through Norwich, across the bridge to Dartmouth—I looked out the window, almost forlorn, like a child drunk with exhaustion on a long family vacation. I wondered what was next. For some reason I wished we had been asked to put our blindfolds back on.

#

[REDACTED] led us up to the house silently. He seemed tired and kind of angry. On the fraternity's impressive portico, among the double story Corinthian columns, [REDACTED]

stood in pajama pants, a soiled polo, and two day old stubble, puffing on the end of a fat cigar. Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar. His face burst open in a knowing smile as he inputted the door code for us, as the lock clicked and the door swung open.

“Greetings whaleshit,” he said. I eyed him nervously. What does “whaleshit” mean, I wondered? Inside the house the foyer was pitch black, living room only lit by the orange glow of a roaring flame in the fireplace.

Blindfolded boys sat on couches pushed up against the walls, heads down between their knees, the scene eerily silent. One boy breathed heavily, but that was it, the only sound, that and the sputtering fireplace and the brothers kneeling before some of the pledges, whispering in their ears and administering to them cups of some liquid that I could not make out in the poor light. Everything was very formal. █████ led me to an empty couch and I felt the leather stick to the back of my legs. He instructed me to put my blindfold back on. Typical, right—just when you start to notice all the unusual things happening around you your sight is denied. Back into the darkness. That was when I noticed the music—laidback jazz, █████ singing “But Not For Me”: “Although I can’t dismiss, the memory of her kiss, I guess she’s not for me.” I’d heard the song before.

Someone tapped me on the head and handed me a warm can of beer, then another, then a cup of something sour. I did my best to chug them. Soon I stopped hearing the scuffling of feet on the floor in the room and the sound of the front door opening and closing as more rushees were brought in. █████ just kept looping, over and over and over again. My sense of time faltered, and I was very drunk, but I suspected that I must have been sitting on the couch for more than an hour.

“Lohse,” I finally heard someone say, “Take off your blindfold. Stand up. The interrogation room is ready for you.” A stern brother led me upstairs to a bedroom, rapped twice on the door, and then closed it behind me. This room was also very dark save for one bright light on the coffee table facing a metal folding chair; one form sat

behind the light but I couldn't identify it until I heard the voice and knew it was [REDACTED]. Whatever was about to happen was most likely going to be very unpleasant.

As my eyes adjusted I could barely trace [REDACTED] silhouette on the other side of the lamp, only his gimp hand hanging in his lap, the shadow cast by his glasses against the wall, a tattered American flag hung over the window behind him. What kind of low budget interrogation was this? I thought—they barely put any effort into the ambience. I looked down and saw six cups of beer sitting on the table in front of me and an industrial sized garbage can next to my chair.

"You obviously know by now that I do not want you to become a brother in this house," [REDACTED] said.

"I know that."

"And I will do everything within my power to make sure that you never wear our letters."

"Well, but—" I tried to interject, attempting to begin my well-rehearsed talking points about what an asset I would be to the pledge class, but he cut me off.

"I'm not interested in what you think, faggot."

"Ok."

"This house means everything to me. I would bring down the Review from the inside if it meant that I could save SAE."

"Me too," I go, "I totally feel what you—" Which was, of course, the absolute wrong thing to say, and certainly not what T [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] But at least one thing was clear. The guy cared about his frat, right?

I was on the verge of laughter, which, in addition to my Freudian slip about betraying the Review, would have probably earned me an ignominious discharge from what I assumed to be my final round of hazing before I was accepted as an SAE pledge. I desperately tried to push these thoughts out of my head—my slip seemed almost funny to me. Typical, I get so far only to fuck things up. Suddenly I felt as if my thoughts were not just my own. He could read my mind, I realized. Things were not going very well.

“Is something funny about this, Lohse?” The tension in the room either suddenly evaporated or multiplied. Details were becoming unclear. The liquor was catching up with me.

“No. No, sir.”

“Is there something funny about how I’m holding your bid card here, between my fingers?”

Between the fingers of your non-deformed hand, you mean, I thought to myself, on the verge of laughing again. Lo and behold it seemed as if the interrogation was a joke after all, that I had been right, that none of the hazing mattered. Because he held my bid card, there it was at last, scrawled in beautiful, pretentious script, ANDREW BUTLER LOHSE, with a watermark of the house’s secret letters. Yes, it did seem that none of this even mattered, that we would all be brothers soon anyway and have an epic circle jerk while wearing backwards hats and chugging whiskey like that famous shot of Bluto in Animal House. You know, just doing the normal things that bros do.

But then [REDACTED] pulled out a matchbox. Wait—what? He was, like, shaking the matches in the shadow of the interrogation lamp, and then, he, well, removed one and struck it against the side of the box. Its flame popped with an elegant supernova of sulphur.

“You see those beers on the table in front of you?”

Yes, I did, even though my vision was beginning to blur. Totally sweet. Am I a brother now? I wanted to ask.

“Sure. Sick beers, bro. Can I grab one?” Oh, to be young, foolish, drunk...

“You can grab all six. And drink them in the time it takes your bid card to burn. Or you can leave and go sink your bid at Tri-Kap. But I don’t think you want to do that.”

“Oh.” I was wondering how he knew that I had a back-up bid in my pocket. Like I said, the guy was crazy. He could read my mind.

And then he lit the card on fire and I watched as the ink bled into almost imperceptible drops running over his other hand, the deformed one, and then I looked up at the ripped American flag and reached for the beers and at some point tried to vomit in the trashcan

but missed and vomited on my penny loafers while simultaneously trying to drink all six but then the card stopped burning and crumbled into a pile of ashes on the coffee table. He just shook his head. That was probably when I started pleading with him.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE HOUSE STAYS IN THE HOUSE

Stepping into Room 5 I am afraid to look up—I am surrounded on almost every side by sweaty shirtless bodies, their shadows flickering against the walls by the light of three small candles. A locker room putrescence dominates. The pledge trainer softly closes the door behind me. I stand in front of a jury of brothers and I can see two tiers of them through my peripheral vision, how many I am, not sure.

The stillness and masculinity in the room summon me to a memory from high school, my sophomore year, undressing in the locker room after one of the last lacrosse practices before the season was to start. We had been run hard. Damp exhaustion lingered in the crowded, unairconditioned locker room—it had no windows—it was like a smaller cave set off from some barely charted cave complex deep within the asylum-like public high school. The space had not encountered fresh air since the school was built in 1972. Thirty adolescent male bodies all in varying stages of disrobing; hairless testicles hung languorously in the shadows of the room's bare fluorescent lights.

No one spoke until [REDACTED], stuttering, broke the silence. He made some joke about the coach running us too hard. It was a joke that a chubby last string underclass JV defenseman was not supposed to make. Less cherubic faces slid their glances in his direction. [REDACTED], the senior captain attack man—stressed from trying to lift our first-year varsity squad into playing shape before the season began and we would have to face the inbred legacy teams of all the nearby gentrified private schools—shook his head slowly. Without a word he pivoted from where he stood crumpling his jockstrap into a ball into the top shelf of his locker and thrust his toned arms at [REDACTED], pushing him backwards over the bench, the younger boy's head of tousled hair thrown hard against the

unforgiving metal of a locker door. A silence so thick that the running sink—some freshman rinsing off his mouth guard, paused in alarm—roared portentously like a water main break.

On the floor, [REDACTED] began to bawl as a small current of blood trickled out from behind his head and down his neck. Nobody moved to help him up. When the moment of tension had almost passed I thought about how sorry I was that [REDACTED] had pushed [REDACTED] like that. I felt sorry that I could do nothing even though I wished I could have jumped on top of the captain and beaten his face to a pulp.

The next day I quit the team even though I had made varsity as a starting midfielder — not because of what [REDACTED] had done, no, I had more mundane reasons than that. But that moment in the locker room summarized feelings that I would never be able to understand until this night. I tried to push the incident from the locker room out of my mind. Things were different now, I reminded myself, I was not going to doubt the older boys anymore, I was not going to have a problem with authority.

I look up and first see three shot glasses on a table before me, then [REDACTED] pecs, and then his expressionless brown eyes. I try to look away. I see instead [REDACTED] standing before me, not the supposedly distinguished President of my fraternity whom I had been told to admire.

“There are three things you have to remember,” he says. I nod, unsure if I am supposed to speak, remembering what happened to [REDACTED]. All the bodies in the room seem to perspire as one collective organism. No one speaks except [REDACTED].

“Number one. Always trust the brotherhood.”

“Always trust the brotherhood,” I repeat.

“Good. Take a shot.” I do. Warm gin. My throat burns—my lips pucker and I nearly drop the shot glass trying to set it back down on the table. I can feel innumerable eyes bearing down on me. The candles flicker.

“Number two. Always trust your pledge brothers.”

I repeat [REDACTED] injunction and drink the second shot, this time gagging more than I did for the first. I cannot tell if it is saltwater, spit, urine, or some mix of all three. My stomach begins to send urgent messages to my brain. Sadly, these messages go missing between depressed nerve endings somewhere in my spinal cord and my cerebellum, and the warning diffuses. Onward, my will demands, do not disappoint the brotherhood.

“Number three. What happens in the house stays in the house.”

“What happens in the house stays in the house,” I mutter sloppily.

I reach for the third shot. Before I can grasp it [REDACTED] grabs my wrist and I accidentally stare into his eyes. I quickly avert my glance. Somehow, only a few days of hazing have already developed in me a great deal of modesty.

“Now, whaleshit, what were the three things I just told you to remember?”

“Always trust—the house—” I stammer.

All of the men in the room shout “No!” I drop my arms to my sides and stare at my [REDACTED] like a scared child. Just as everyone I had heard before me, I fucked it up. I wait to be struck by some unforeseen enforcer, like [REDACTED] was, but the blow never comes. The pledge trainer opens the door and leads me back through the darkened hallway to the library, thrusts a copy of the Phoenix—the fraternity’s book—into my hands and tells me to sit back down on the floor and continue studying.

I GOT PUNCHED IN THE FACE BY A BILLIONAIRE

Sometime after meetings on March 31st, right around the night’s imperceptible pivot into morning that occurs in the minutes around midnight, the calendar shifted without anyone registering any appreciable change. Though this usually happens, and is seldom ever noticed except on the last day of the year, something went very wrong this time. After the last SAE song had been sung and the last brother had downed the last beer, [REDACTED] and I returned to my room in Wheeler. [REDACTED] had been waiting there with the blow. As bad luck would have it, by that time it was already the first of the next month.

Six years prior my grandfather had passed away in a turbulent sleep early in the morning of April Fool's Day. It was certainly like the man to slip from his body on a day like that, without telling in advance any of the family members who had kept a vigil around his bed. He left without any profound advice. If he could have, he probably would have told me, as [REDACTED] had told the pledges before sink night: "don't fuck this up." If the old man only knew. Then again, maybe he did.

The last words I remember hearing him utter—maybe a week or two before his death—he inserted into an awkward pause in one of the vigil's attempted conversations with him. The uncomfortable ellipse lasted a moment too long for the dying man. With little deliberation he stared straight ahead at the wall and remarked, unironically, "it appears that no one has anything of any value to say to anyone at this time." He had a habit of being as true as a poison-tipped dagger.

Unbeknownst to [REDACTED] as she was cutting up lines of blow on the glass top of a picture of the deceased as a handsome young man at Dartmouth during the war years, Austin Lohse had carried his apoplectic energy into the bardo in which he was currently trapped. How long he had been caught in that liminal space I can't say.

There are just those nights when you mess with the wrong ancestor spirit. This was one of them. It was a classic case of wrong picture frame, wrong night, wrong supernatural force; [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and I were dealing with a very punctilious ghost who would be wandering the College's gloomy sidewalks until he could guarantee that his heirs would right the family's imaginary lost legacy, and our blunted coke razor from the local art supply store was insufficient defense to his otherworldly righteousness. [REDACTED] cut the lines as [REDACTED] and I argued over what song we would blast as we snorted them. He insisted on "Party in the USA", but no, I knew, we needed something more potent, something more—

From YouTube I summoned a video of “Man in the Mirror” live at Bucharest and waited a few minutes as the song picked up, staring at the thick glistening line bisecting my grandfather’s perfectly parted hair. “I’m starting with the man-in-the-mirror-”, my subwoofer vibrated, as, in the video, crying masses experienced religious ecstasy while Michael collapsed off stage and was resurrected, saddled with a jetpack, and sent into the sky. I could relate to the scene. Maybe it was the Icarus myth, maybe it was because the audience would only see their hero launch, not fall.

#

We returned to SAE, at that point still unaware of the spirit we had channeled despite the fact that something felt off—all the brothers in the basement seemed tense, the keg ran dry early, there was a problem with the lights. But the night progressed as typical Wednesday nights do, pong, hanging out, excessive binging until [REDACTED] would entrust me with her baggie of coke and go back to my room early to go to sleep and [REDACTED] would pass out somewhere in the house. It was as if my grandfather had waited to catch me strung out and alone to have a word with me. The events of the night, and the next early morning, would ultimately be the final nail in the coffin of my house political dreams and the beginning of a languorous downward spiral which would, once and for all, violently abort what remained to be delivered of my perverted Dartmouth legacy. This is all to say that it was an excitingly pugnacious night that I won’t soon forget. At least the parts I can remember. Funny to think that this was all the fury of a purgatoried grandfather.

I met up with [REDACTED] and we did the rest of [REDACTED] blow in the pool room. Around five am we were still tweaked out, playing pong, and though the basement was starting to thin out and the beer had dried up, our thirst for total confusion of the senses was not at all close to being sated. We were in our primal zone—we had declared the night a “Hail Mary Night”, a designation that we would furnish a few times a term for a night of craven mischief and unparalleled substance abuse, a type of night which had only three rules: 1.

You must say no to nothing 2. You must proactively find things to say yes to 3. The night must end at Chi Gam.

Just as our chain smoking had finally depleted our second pack of Marlboros, two ADs walked into the basement, wanting to play pong; of course, [REDACTED] and I were only too eager to acquiesce. However, the fraternity had just run out of beer—the fly in the ointment, so to speak—no, the dead flies in the punch...because a recycling bin full of vodka and powdered pink lemonade, speckled with dead flies, was all that remained to drink. The ADs said that they wanted to play for money, so [REDACTED] and I laughed, thinking that they meant like, twenty dollars or something. We said sure. After all, we had pledged to say no to nothing, right? They pulled out their wallets; each had multiple hundred dollar bills, in total about \$1200, which they placed on the pong table in a spot not coated with frat grime adhesive. The stack of bills—not completely crisp, but virginal enough to suggest an inescapable sense of privilege—caused [REDACTED] to immediately pull me aside, concerned. Our conversations could turn incredibly sober at a moment's notice. .

“Dude, do you think I actually have \$600 like, lining my pockets?” he asked me, looking over his shoulder nervously to make sure the other guys couldn't hear.

“I know that I certainly don't.”

“What are we going to do then?” His eye twitched.

“I'll write them a check.”

“Write them a check? Are you kidding? I think that's [REDACTED], his dad is a trustee. The founder of [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

“Perfect,” I replied.

“Why?”

“Because he'll never cash it. What does it fucking matter? Let's hang out. Hail Mary, buddy.” So I abruptly ended the conversation, motioned back towards the pong table, and told [REDACTED] that I'd write him a check and he just smiled thinly and said, like, sure, whatever, and [REDACTED] and I looked each other deep in the eyes solemnly and crossed ourselves, repeating in unison “Hail Mary full of grace” and racked up the game with the

tainted lemonade that had been sitting in its dirty plastic receptacle since Monday. They sank two cups on the first two hits. Then I defaulted on a serve. ■ almost did too. It was becoming clear that the night would not end at Chi Gam.

SOCIAL CHAIR ELECTION

So I went up to him and was like, can I get next? And he just stared past me for a second and served the ball, a really good serve with just the right amount of spin, clearly one of the best pong players in the house and then when some other girl on the other side, I think probably a Kappa, returned the serve to his partner he looked at me and said “Line’s fourth, bud, how’s that?” rhetorically and hit the ball, sunk a cup. And I was like ■, are you fucking serious? It’s grim city down here and no other table had a line. I walked back towards ■, standing at the bar, who was basically not very interested in talking to me since I peed in our trashcan last night but forgot to put a liner in it beforehand and in the morning had been like “So what? No one hangs out anymore” (besides, it’s not as if he didn’t pee in our trashcan all the time either) but I knew he’d get over it, probably in the next hour after he shot-gunned a few more beers with this borderline attractive Asian freshman he had, one might say, coaxed, back into the kitchen with him. I leaned on the bar and shook my head at ■. Contemplated giving him the finger but that wouldn’t be a very fraternal thing to do. Guess he wasn’t backing me for social, I figured. House politics were easy come and easy go and my loss of political capital seemed to be irrefutable proof that my trajectory at Dartmouth, both socially and emotionally, was on a steep downward slant. ■ walked down the basement steps and said something like, hey bro, what’s going on?

“■ is such a douchebag.”

“Obviously,” he goes as I handed him a cup of beer, “But he’s our douchebag,” and then started humming the tune for the house’s doming song, *Why was he born so beautiful why was he born at all*, etc etc. And I’m like, ya think? He’s not my douchebag. There’s only room for one in this house.

“Gave me fourth. There’s almost, like, no one in the basement,” I said.

"Want me to go over and give him a little smooch?"

"No."

"Are you still running for social?" he asked.

"Why? Yeah, of course."

"Just wondering."

"Please don't tell me [REDACTED] is running too." That was the last thing I needed, like, especially because he had already promised me, a week ago while we were doing lines with [REDACTED] before the whole [REDACTED] situation happened, in fact it was probably the same night, he was really coked out and we shook on it. But I guess dirty deals don't last long now do they?

"Honestly, Lohse, not sure how many guys are going to back you after that April Fool's Day stunt you pulled."

"Stunt that I pulled? Are you kidding me? The guy punched me in the face. And then [REDACTED] called the cops. That's like, rule number one, never call the cops." But seriously it was, I mean, who wanted law enforcement nosing around the house what with mysterious white residues caked over every picture frame and empty unregistered kegs lying around everywhere like secret WMD caches.

"Whatever man, let's talk about this when we're sober."

"I am sober, dude." I said.

"Sucks to suck. Let's call table in varsity."

"Okay."

"Where is [REDACTED] tonight?"

"Went to Burlington with [REDACTED] to buy coke." I knew that this would interest him. His eyes lit up.

"How much?"

"We'll talk when we're sober."

"You little shit," he said, then we called table in Varsity, played too much pong, I saw [REDACTED] leaving with that Asian who suddenly seemed to be the hottest girl in the basement but when I stumbled home later in the night he was just playing Robot Unicorn Attack by himself and blasting Led Zeppelin and his eyes were really red and he just

looked up and giggled as I laid down on the futon and the girl was nowhere in sight and I didn't have enough energy to bother asking if he got it in or not. He pointed at the trashcan. Full of piss again. Not me dude, not me, I sighed and he giggled, but, like, none of this was funny and we were just doing it over and over and over again.

#

Sunday afternoon of election day I woke up to take a shower but that asshole Psi U from across the hall had locked the stall door even though no one was using the other side's showerhead. I knocked on the door but he ignored me. You'd think that after having to fuck a frozen turkey as part of his pledge term, and having to measure all of the other pledges' dicks, that, well, a Psi U would be a little more nonchalant about being naked within a reasonable distance—separated by a fucking shower curtain for God's sake—from another frat guy. But, alas, no. He was probably still drunk from last night.

I walked down a floor in my towel and saw [REDACTED] in the third floor bathroom (he moved into my old room on that floor when I had moved in upstairs with [REDACTED], after he had come back from Shanghai or something at the beginning of the term). He was shaving, humming some Lady Gaga song to himself or something. Typical. He didn't look up to see who had come in so I decided to play it cool, throwing my towel over the shower rod, I stepped in the shower and waiting for the water to warm up before I would drop my bomb on him, that I had heard that he was going to run against me tonight. He was cornered. By the time the water was hot enough and I was done shivering and had built up my confidence, I was like, "Hey bud, heard about your political aspirations." Silence. Must have caught the little jerk off-guard. I waited a few seconds and then peered around the curtain, out the unlocked stall door, at the sink. He was gone. I hadn't heard him leave but he must have slipped out when I turned the water on. Go figure. Everyone had been outsmarting me. I was even outsmarting myself.

GREEN KEY: LORD OF THE FLIES REDUX

“Who has the highest max on their credit card?” She asked, coke glistening in a pile on the composite, collected neatly between the smiling faces of the EMINENT ARCHON and the EMINENT DEPUTY ARCHON, the frat’s fancy names for President and Vice President respectively. We each fumbled with our wallets and tossed our cards down on the pool table like something out of a movie, I was thinking, well, how the fuck did things get this far? I burped, got a taste of Keystone, instinctively wiped my mouth and then wiped my hand on my critter pants. American Express, Chase Manhattan Signature, some other imprints I had never before seen in my life. My student Visa was trifling in comparison. In this moment it was basically laid bare: Lohse, you are literally not a card-carrying member of this in-crowd,

“\$20,000 limit,” █████ said. █████ slid his card on top of hers.

“\$35,000,” he goes, and for some reason, I believed him because no one was joking around, because credit card limits were a rather serious deal in this set. As usual █████ was kind of sloppy drunk from meetings, claimed he didn’t have his wallet but I could tell that he must not have it on purpose because, assumedly, his limit was modest like mine and neither he nor I would lie about something like this to seem cooler. So I just didn’t answer.

“Clearly, \$35,000 takes the prize,” I said. █████ won the honor chopping the blow into eight sizable lines.

“Can we snort them off my face?” █████ asked sweetly, smiling and slurring the “r” in snort. Of course we can, █████ replied. █████ shifted the pile from EMINENT DEPUTY ARCHON to EMINENT SOCIAL CHAIRMAN, █████ face staring up at us from the composite, that same sweet smile, the piercing blue eyes. He was a nice kid, with a sweet face, just like me, who’d probably much rather be in bed reading Treasure Island than ingesting expensive stimulants. Instead of feeling embarrassed about his credit card limit.

#

Everything happened very quickly. [REDACTED] poked his head in the door and we told him to go the fuck away. Next thing we knew [REDACTED] came in and was like, [REDACTED] just called the police, you ought to close up shop. There were still a few lines of blow on the composite so we quickly snorted it up, off [REDACTED] face—pink shirt, blue tie, irrepressible smile—and hung the composite back over the fire place. We stepped out of the room and [REDACTED] pushed [REDACTED] against the wall of the foyer as a crowd gathered, watching. Brothers were making everyone vacate the basement. [REDACTED] jogged up to his room. I didn't know where [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] went. I found myself alone up on the frat's balcony, pebble beach, somehow, by accident.

#

From pebble I watched as Safety and Security and Hanover Police descended on the house. The game was over. The frat castle had been compromised. An SNS officer biked up to the back door. Seeing me standing alone, he shone his flashlight up towards the balcony but the beams trailed off in the fog and for a brief moment his face was illuminated beneath me. This was the last thing he would like to be doing on a Thursday morning.

Sometimes you get so spoiled by the feeling that you are above punishment that you try to get clever about it, try to charm, try to use empathy as a weapon. Instead, I dug myself in deeper. For some reason I was holding a container of Tropicana orange juice wet with rain, and in a final act of desperate bad behavior, I leaned over the railing and threw it at the tired looking officer. Of course I missed. He yelled something. I ignored him and walked over to the other side of the balcony where he couldn't see me, fumbled in my pocket for my cigarettes. Of course the pack was empty; only a few little brown leaves fell out when I shook it.

It began to rain harder and I stared up at Baker tower overcome with the ineffable feeling that my Dartmouth dream was really over, that I had come so far to have it all end like

the ignominious finale of some mobster movie. I pictured Al Pacino at the end of Scarface. It was only a matter of time before the long arm of the law found me up here leaning over the railing, alone, just me and the night, the unintimidating kid I was, stupid and so far off track that it wasn't even funny anymore.

█████ climbed out the window onto Pebble. "Lohse, you better get out of here, it looks like the police left. Coast is clear. Go back to Wheeler," he said sternly. I hesitated. "Go—now," he said, "I'll come with you. We need to run." We climbed down the fire escape ladder and jogged back to the dorm, entertaining the thought that, maybe, we had evaded apprehension. But that thought only lasted until two Safety officers came knocking at my door, and, sniffing wildly, I agreed to go with them to have a little "chat" with two "very nice" detectives who were waiting for me.

TURNING OURSELVES IN, TELLING OUR PARENTS, MAKING PACTS

The next Wednesday we learned that warrants had been issued for our arrest so we gathered in Room 6 to read, together, the emails we had each received from Hanover Police. Like, seriously? These days the authorities advise you over email that there is a warrant out for your arrest on multiple felony counts? It was a hot, bright day but the air conditioning in the room was thick, sterile. We had twenty-four hours to turn ourselves in; █████ suggested that we wait for the cops to come get us, said it would be more dramatic to be pulled out of class in handcuffs. He tried to laugh but faltered. God, I thought, I can't watch him cry. Like, please don't. █████ just stared at his computer screen. He showed no signs of moving from the couch.

"█████, that's a terrible idea," █████ said, squeezing his hand. I felt a pang of jealousy. I paced the room.

"You're right," he conceded. █████ just continued staring at the screen.

"What the fuck are we going to do? I thought we scrubbed the composite?" I said.

“What are we going to do? We are going to go to the police station tomorrow morning and turn ourselves in.”

“But—”

“Yeah how can we do that?” █████ said, “there’s no way we can do that.” It wasn’t just █████ about to cry, but █████ too—I saw his blue eyes fog over. But he just stared, stared at the screen.

That night we went out to Yama for dinner. We promised each other that we wouldn’t talk about tomorrow but when the waitress came to our table to take our drink order I ordered a coke and we all looked at each other, █████ choked up, █████ stonefaced and silent under his UVA baseball cap. It was not possible to avoid what was waiting for us.

The next morning I put on khakis and a navy blazer and rep tie that had belonged to my grandfather and met the others at the house. We got in █████ Nissan. It was the same car that had brought me to SAE the night I pledged. We drove past the golf course where I had run with the pledges in the same outfit, sprinting through a chilly night while the brothers drove past screaming time-honored obscenities; “You’re so fucked,” they had yelled. I tried to smile for my mug shot but could only manage a smirk. So fucked indeed.

DRAGON’S GATE, NO LO CONTENDERE, VOX CLAMANTIS EN
PARKHURSTO

I woke up in the libes, air conditioning set to sixty, I was shivering and in severe bodily pain—as if my stomach had turned itself inside out, a queasy feeling accompanied by a harsh burning in my nasal cavities that seemed to indicate that last night I had snorted something along the lines of broken glass. I rolled over on the cold leather couch and saw █████ sitting with his feet up on one of the tables. A shaft of light from a dormer cut across his face. I blinked. He could have been an apparition. The house was haunted with brothers past.

“Someone had a rough night. Don’t worry though, I passed out in here too. Just woke up, man.”

"What time is it?" I asked him, rubbing my eyes.

"Almost time to go to Dragon's Gate. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] should be here soon."

We were getting the house's secret Phi Alpha tattoo; two '09s were coming up from Boston to get it with us. The thought of a possibly AIDS-riddled needle piercing the soft flesh around my ribcage made me nauseous.

"Is there time to go get some food? Are you hungry?" I asked. I felt anemic. He leaned back in the chair and shook his head. There wasn't enough time, he explained. We would have to do this on an empty stomach. It would be an adventure in collective self-laceration. I winced, about ready to back out, and when the libes door swung open and the '09s walked in with the air of smug cynicism popular among recent graduates, I considered just rolling over and freezing to death on the couch. No one suffering from wall unit air conditioner induced hypothermia ought to have needles stuck into them before lunchtime on a Saturday. Everything was a joke to these guys.

We got in [REDACTED] Camry. On the way to Dragon's Gate Steve and I didn't really say much. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] did most of the talking, giggling at each other's sorry attempts at humor. They had wanted to get the Phi Alpha during their senior spring, they said, but other circumstances had intervened—namely binge drinking and the casual ingestion of mind altering substances. Every comment was an inside joke, and though we were all supposed to be brothers, [REDACTED] and I were always on the outside of the conversation. I spent most of the ride staring out the window at the dismal New Hampshire towns we passed through, one by one, unsure if I even wanted to get the mark when we ultimately arrived. It felt just like bid night—driving back to the house from the woods in Norwich, blindfold removed, only certain about my uncertainty as to where we were going and why, what would be waiting for us. How did I find myself in situations like this, always just outside of my comfort zone? Sadly, I knew that most of the brothers probably felt that way too, most of the time. Like, being in a frat to begin with was an act of collective self-laceration in itself.

The thing was, I didn't want to get the Phi Alpha for any cheap reason—I didn't want it because I loved my brothers, and certainly not because I wanted to signify myself as

being owned by the supposedly hallowed secrets of the house. Strange to consider. Everything was all inverted. I didn't love them and I was getting the tattoo because of the trauma of the spring, the fact that we were still waiting for our day in court. ■■■■■, ■■■■■, and ■■■■■—accused and accuser—all bore the mark, so it seemed right to close the circuit. Our lives would probably never be the same. Our bodies should be records of our experiences.

The tattoo parlor was above a dirty Chinese restaurant in some small town that I couldn't have found on a map if I had ever cared enough to try, and as soon as we arrived I made vague promises to myself that I'd never return, even if ■■■■■ tapped for me Gryphon—his secret society. We paced nervously around the room while ■■■■■ took his pants off and laid down on the vinyl table. He was getting the mark on his hip. The tattoo artist was swarthy and covered in ink himself. Typical with these people; they bend their painful addictions into careers, but maybe that's no different than the rest of us Ivy Leaguers save for the fact that this guy's self-inflicted pain is brief and sharp and produces something beautiful—art, on his body—and not dull and lifelong, played out in some yuppie commuter town in Fairfield County, some country club, board rooms full of plastic people.

As he fumbled with the needles and tubes and glistening tools he asked the rest of us, baring his yellowed teeth in a smile, if we were drunk. Booze dulls the stabs, he said, the constant slicing of skin. What a moron. It's like, yeah, thank you, sir, for stating the obvious—as a card carrying alcoholic I probably could have hazarded a guess at that—now please continue giving our dear friend and scholar, Eminent House Manager ■■■■■ '0■, hepatitis and a blurry approximation of our house's secret symbol. My hangover was pissing me off and maybe, just maybe, I was getting cold feet about the house tattoo, being marked for life by a traumatic experience that was far from settled yet. Too late, I thought, laying on that same vinyl table. The first prick. Yes, a tumbler of Wild Turkey would have been delightful. Anything to dull the stabs. The man had a point.

BLEEDING GREEN

It was around six AM when I started to really feel hungry — something toxic was churning in the empty space of my stomach where solid matter should have been. Then the remorse hit. It didn't have to be like this, I knew, thought to myself, like, of course Lohse, this was always where you found yourself, in the frat basement at dawn, underground where you can't even see the beautiful sunrise that will soon roll over the College and the town and bathe the electric yellow leaves falling off the trees with the kind of pale rays that landscape painters and amateur photographers spend their whole lives chasing. It's really too bad. I always made the party scene but in making the scene I always missed the scenes I should be seeing. Like I learned as a whaleshit, "what happens in the house stays in the house." Didn't realize that the brothers meant it so literally.

And my life had happened so intensely in the house that I was beginning to suspect that I would not like to stay in that dim basement beneath the crumbling mansion anymore, that maybe I would have liked to get in my car and not stop driving until I got home and woke up my mother and just sobbed and apologized and said that, well, mom, I wish it didn't have to be this way. That's what I was wishing for as my eyes trailed the pong ball bouncing across the table. She'd say that no, Andrew, it doesn't, she'd say that I'm still a kid and that there's still time. She'd call me Andrew, not Lohse, because Andrew is my given name. Supposed to be biblical, Christ's first follower. I wouldn't know where to look anyway if I ever tried to follow him.

Then when I would be done sobbing I would call up [REDACTED] and depledge Sigma Alpha Epsilon and shame all the entitled animalistic bastards that made me chug vinegar and vomit until the blood vessels around my eyes burst into little red dots that resembled some sort of rare tropical malady. No, it was six AM, and I was not in a good spot. Feelings always get the best of me and I was so drunk that I was on the cusp of blacking

out, you know, not making any more memories but still being completely in control of my motor functions.

Frankly, I knew should have ended the pong game and found a comfortable tile floor somewhere to rest my pretty head. In one of my last coherent thoughts, I told myself, Lohse, you son of a bitch, if you were halfway as decent as you think you ought to be, as you once were, you'd be cuddling in your bed right now with some moderately attractive blonde, some studio art major with a sizable trust fund and pearls on her neck the size of anal beads. The kind of girl who would blush at her pearls being compared to anal beads, but that's a conversation that you'd never have with her, one that would only come up in meetings and all the brothers would laugh about it and you would take a beer or twelve and vomit until everyone moved on to ribbing some other guy over his boring future trophy wife. The kind of girl who would confiscate my beers when my vision blurred because she's nice like that, total sweetheart, sympathetic, and she knew that my WASP grandfather hammered impeccable manners into me, but that the frat tended to, shall we say, downplay those manners.

I steadied myself against the pong table and focused my limited attention on the gleaming cups of beer on the other side, the blurry, boyish faces of pledges, the fluorescent shadows of grime and spray-painted slang coating the walls behind their heads. My personal point of no return was quickly bearing down on me. I knew that I was accelerating towards some kind of pivot where I could no longer be Lohse, where I'd probably just snap. This feeling is typically presaged by thoughts of my mother and that's how I knew that doom was waiting for me. It's like, never enter a labyrinth if your only goal is to get out, right?

I knew this feeling with an impossible clarity but had never gotten so close to the edge before. That night, that morning, however you look at it, it was something different, like a whole identity was dying. The strange vibe set in with that twenty-eighth or twenty-ninth drink of the night, the one that began to subject my body to the capricious vibrations that

emanate from the skull as one approaches the end. It's not a near death experience, really, not like any of the car crashes I've been in, specifically once skidding out on a torrentially wet summer Vermont highway at ninety with a tractor trailer bearing down on me one sad summer. This time it was a different experience—more like a religious epiphany about the frailness of my body. Because this was something I was doing to myself with no way to stop.

But now the odyssey could continue no further without fuel; in this case, unabated self-destruction would end in death without breakfast. In fact, I imagined that at some indefinite reflection point in the future, for a bare instant, my coffin was selected. Maybe it was even monogrammed. Each stroke of the pong paddle became the colossus-like gesture of a pall bearer. I set down my paddle. Something in me, a spark from the future, had reached the present early and persuaded my inactive conscious mind to surrender. There was no use delaying the inevitable, it said. You must take the pledges to breakfast. Boys, game's over, I said, it's like, game over for the night, we're going to Lou's. Breakfast time for whaleshit.

As usual, the assembled whaleshit had no say in the matter, but at least this time there would be no vomit in the omelettes, no laxatives in the non-alcoholic beverages, no vinegar for them to drink out of a mop bucket. In their stupor they nodded. Yes, Brother Regina, we are hungry, they parroted back at me. I put my blazer on, affixed my ironic baby blue DARTMOUTH GOP baseball cap backwards over my tousled side part, led them out the front door.

The first light of a damp New England morning glowed through the pines. Maybe I would see the sunrise after all, I considered. I congratulated myself on my self control, my coming to the brink and pulling back quickly enough to realize that the grim reaper was swimming around in that last cup of beer, the one that probably would have pushed my BAC over point four. The fastest route to the diner was through an unthreatening roped off area around the bonfire kindling, a well-worn circle where generations of

freshman had run around the flames seeing little through a myopia equal parts illicit liquor and the ecstasy of their largest initiation to date into what they believed was the elite American meritocracy. It was always a night where monsters were made in boys becoming men. The monster in me is habitually early to these events, as it was in this case—a full twelve hours premature. I ducked under the rope and instructed the pledges to follow. A raspy voice greeted us from around the structure; I had to squint to see its sneer. Here was a woman whose authority seemed to proceed not from the meaningless Safety and Security badge on her chest but from the tenor of the thousands of packs of Virginia Slims she had smoked since adolescence. What was this, the fun police? Can't this shedevel see that we were practically starving to death, that breakfast is, you know, the most important meal of the day? Our generation has been inundated with commercials saying so.

Whether or not the officer said not to walk there, I can't remember—according to an official reconstruction of events, I responded to the officer's injunction with the flat "I can walk wherever I want to walk", and then picked up a folding chair (what business folding chairs had in the next night's initiation I can't say) and flung it in her general direction with little finesse. That seemed to settle things. Sometimes I have these, uh, fits of existential rebellion. We continued to the diner with little interruption and proceeded to order breakfast. I made sure the pledges were on their absolute best behavior.

Things were going swimmingly until the silhouette of a burly black cop appeared near the breakfast counter. I tried whistling a blithe song while staring at my toast and feigning my best "nothing to see here" smile. Maybe he just wanted coffee and a doughnut. He seemed to be grilling the diner's proprietor about some kind of convict on the run. Surely couldn't be me, I told myself, I'm not the convict from Great Expectations, I'm feeling more like Pip—turned upside down and all shook up in some gloomy graveyard somewhere. When the hostess directed the cop towards us words failed me. My Faustian bargain had finally been called in and I was under water in interest payments.

He came over to the table. I smiled wanly. He said he was looking for a suspect in a pink oxford shirt, grey blazer, and blue baseball cap. I estimated the seconds it would take to remove these items from my person and wondered if, by some means of prestidigitation, I could complete the task before the officer—the kind who seemed as if he misses nothing—might maybe miss the fact that his question was rhetorical.

Instead I relented. After all, he was only asking for a word outside the restaurant. Disagreeable conversations with law enforcement are usually unpleasant for patrons trying to enjoy their breakfast after a long night and morning of binge drinking, and I didn't want to put the pledges out. [REDACTED] and the other guys were putting them through too much hazing already, if you'd asked me.

We stepped outside. Morning was hazy. The policeman was flanked by another Safety and Security officer. None of the faces seemed particularly memorable. I can only picture my own face, the innocently skeptical expression I'd practiced when dealing with ambassadors of the law—which is strange, no one ever really knows how they appear, least of all after enough liquor to euthanize an entire petting zoo. It was the light that stood out, that strange purgatory where neither night has ended nor morning has begun, the moment when the streetlamps seem to accidentally switch off early, the feeling of confusion caused by unanticipated lighting. Morning comes more quickly than we think it can.

The black cop—I noticed for the first time that he had electric green eyes—informed me that I had thrown a chair at a College official. I continued my look of collected skepticism while shaking my head respectfully. No, no, you've got it all wrong, I said. I didn't throw the chair *at* an officer. I would never do that. But certainly, sir, I can't deny that I *did* throw *a* chair, and if it was damaged in any way, I would gladly pay to replace it if you would only permit me a short few minutes to return to my dormitory and come back, right to this very spot, I promise of course, sir, with my checkbook—

There I go again, I thought, talking too much, slurring the words unconvincingly. If you were halfway decent, Lohse, you would have slowed down your motor mouth and played along and let the guys with the badges make most of the small talk. Whenever I actually needed those impeccable manners they were usually caught somewhere south of my larynx.

Then came the inevitable flashlight shone in my eyes (which by this time was wholly unnecessary and only an act of patronizing intimidation): “how much have you had to drink tonight, Mr. Lohse?” the cop asked politely. The recurring voice in my head from the future reminded me that my king was exposed, that I was only a few moves away from being checkmated, that I had lost my queen and that my one misplaced rook would be far from sufficient to deliver me from this game ending bind. My limited knowledge of chess seemed to say that the best I could play for now was a dishonorable stalemate. So I told the assemblage that, well, sure, I’d had a few drinks, but being over the age of twenty-one, you see—

Apparently neither man saw what I was leading towards and neither did I. The Safety officer asked if I would go with him to receive medical care for my level of intoxication. Of course. Yes, of course. I have a very low tolerance for the firewater, I said with a friendly smile as I climbed into the back of his vehicle, police officer duly dispatched. A stalemate with honor. I would live to play the game again. No police, no problems.

#

Next thing I remember I’m in an examining room in Dick’s House, the health center, with two nurses and a new Safety and Security henchman. They are asking me to blow into a breathalyzer. Before I do I cough liberally to lay the groundwork for the suggestion that I am very asthmatic from a childhood of All-American sports and excessive horseplay in my bucolic suburban backyard. Of course, no breath I offer is enough to sate these fiends, and the fictionally fragile state of my lungs does not interest them in the

slightest. Whatever blurry digital number the machine produces is enough for a round of concerned head-nodding from the assembled health professionals. Again I attempt my skeptical, goodhearted head shake—"oh wow, would you look at that, this thing must need new batteries," I offer with my most charming smile.

As per College policy, the officer asks me if I will promise to stay the morning, and potentially most of the afternoon, in a bed at Dick's House. I consider her offer judiciously but ultimately decide that no, it would be a violation of my Constitutional rights to assent to such an agreement, as I am of age, willingly seeking medical care, and, if at some indefinite point in the future—say, in the next fifteen minutes—I no longer wish to receive medical care, it is my right not to be entrapped in this sterile hellhole, which I can only assume to be what Sartre had in mind while writing *No Exit*. I inform the officer of my scrupulous civil liberties argument, but she is unimpressed.

Then a dramatic revelation took place. A different police officer entered from out of hiding in the hallway. He had been eavesdropping. He shook his head and smiled. He said I'd have to come spend some time with him at the lock-up. One by one I offered the Safety officer and both nurses a deflated, quizzical look. Really? I said. They cackled. I promised to stay, I said, but no, the Safety officer replied bitterly, it was too late.

By the time the cop walked me out of Dick's House it was almost fully morning. I sat in the back of his cruiser as he handcuffed me and shackled my feet, and then fitted me with a belt connecting all of my new hardware.

#

Green is the color of money, the color of nature, and the color of all the College shutters in Hanover, New Hampshire. It is the color I saw in a fever dream of dry inebriation asleep in the back of a cop car driving me away from Dartmouth—I leaned into the shackles, lost, powerless.

And what was that feeling being driven away from the College in the unyielding cold sunbeams of a perfectly clear autumn morning—the unlit homecoming bonfire dull and foreboding over the College green, inscribed with names and organizations and strange oaths that from the disappearing point of the Crown Victoria’s back window faded fast into unintelligible lines of crude paint waiting to be incinerated? Drifting in and out of the languorous dream and quickly evaporating drunken malaise of half-seen visions: decaying leaves, a reflection of my cold red cheeks as a boy, the uninterrupted glow of fluorescent ceiling tile lights of all the cold linoleum schools of my youth...

I did not know where I was being taken. I can hardly say I cared. I was forced to surrender everything, again, and my body was immobilized and useless. Words failed. Only an unstoppable violence of which I would never be capable could free me. The car bent around a line of pines and finally the campus was out of sight, bonfire gone far in the distance, the last College building pulled out of view. Homecoming was beginning; soon, I knew I would be coming home.